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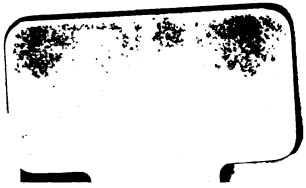

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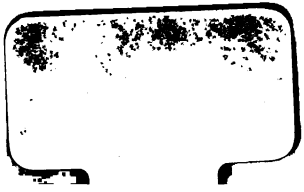

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THE MIRACLES OF OUR LORD

EXPLAINED

TO COUNTRY CHILDREN.

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THE MIRACLES

OF

OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST,

EXPLAINED TO COUNTRY CHILDREN.

BY

THE REV. S. C. MALAN, D.D.,

VICAR OF BROADWINDSOR.

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PREFACE.

AS I have reason to think that "The Parables of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Explained to Country Children," which I published a few years ago, were well received and understood of those for whom they were written, I now venture to add to those volumes, a short exposition of Our Lord's Miracles, intended for the same class of readers.

May God, in His mercy, bless what these pages may teach, that is worthy of His blessing.

S. C. MALAN.

THE VICARAGE, BROADWINDSOR,
November, 1880.

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By the same author.

THE PARABLES OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, EXPLAINED TO COUNTRY CHILDREN.
In two vols., fcp. 8vo.

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THE MIRACLES

OF

OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST,

EXPLAINED TO COUNTRY CHILDREN.

INTRODUCTION.

YOU remember, children, that soon after our Lord had wrought His first miracle at Cana of Galilee, He went up to Jerusalem at the Passover.

As a great many people came to the Feast from all parts—not only from other parts of the country, but from other parts of the world—our Saviour found the outer court of the Temple full of market-people, selling sheep and oxen for sacrifices, and doves for other offerings.

There were there also money-changers—men who gave money of Jerusalem for the money of other countries—sitting at their tables, and busy at work counting their money.

When He saw that, He made "a scourge"—that is, a whip—"of small cords," and drove out of the Temple all those people, with their sheep and oxen. He then turned over the tables of the money-changers, and said unto them, "Take these things

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hence, and make not my Father's house a house of merchandise" (*S. John*, ii. 13-17).

Of course, people wondered very much at His daring to do that; yet no one interfered. They only asked Him what sign He could show—what token He had to give, that He had a right to clear the courts of the Temple of all those who bought and sold there.

And our Lord answered: "I can give you a sign or token of it. 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'"

But the Jews did not understand Him: they thought He meant it of the buildings of the Temple; whereas our Saviour meant it of His own body, in which God Himself dwelt, as it were in a temple.

Now you remember, children, that after our Saviour had died on the Cross, He was buried, and then rose again on the third day.

But how could He rise again?

He rose again, because being God as well as man, He had life in Himself; so that death could not keep Him dead, as it keeps us, till our flesh and bones return to the dust whence we were taken.

Since, then, the Saviour had power to raise Himself from the dead, because He is the Son of God, He had also power and authority to drive all those market-people from His Father's house—the Temple at Jerusalem.

Everybody in Jerusalem heard of this, and wondered who He could be that did it. Then many people had come from Galilee, and had told

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how that same Jesus had wrought a miracle there, and had turned water into wine at a marriage feast—at all of which, the people of Jerusalem wondered still more.

So one of them, a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, and a master in Israel—that is, an elderly, great, rich, and learned man—whose name was Nicodemus, came, as you know, to the Saviour, to see Him, and to hear what He had to say. But he came by night.

Why?

— Because he was afraid people should see him?

Yes; but why? I'll tell you. He was afraid lest other Pharisees, and the common people, should see him—a great master as he was—come to see a poor man like that Jesus of Nazareth, and of Galilee, too; who looked only a poor man, and one of the common people, with whom Pharisees would have nothing to do; although He did such wonderful things as turning water into wine, and driving a whole market-full of people out of the Temple.

You see, children, that Nicodemus was afraid of men; but bear in mind what Scripture says, that "The fear of man bringeth a snare, but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe" (*Prov.* xxix. 25). It means, that we must never be afraid of others when we do right; for, if we are afraid of doing right because they see us, and we are not afraid of doing wrong though God sees us, how

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will it do? But we know this, that God will always be on our side when we do right.

So Nicodemus came to the Saviour, and addressed Him with great respect, saying: "Rabbi—my great master," the very name by which people addressed Nicodemus himself,—"Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him" (*S. John*, iii. 2).

You see then, children, that although Nicodemus was afraid to come to the Saviour by day, yet was he not one of those Pharisees, who said our Lord wrought His miracles "through Beelzebub, the prince of the devils" (*S. Matt.* xii. 24). But Nicodemus felt great respect for the Saviour; because he saw that no man could do the wonderful things He did, unless God was with Him to do them.

And he was right. The signs and wonders, or miracles, our Saviour wrought, and which I am going to explain to you, little people, showed that God had sent Him from heaven to this earth, and that He was come from thence. Otherwise He could not have done them.

Let me then, first of all, explain to you what is "a miracle."

"A miracle" is the same as "a wonder." And you know how often you wonder at things you don't understand.

The other day, when that man came with the show to the village, some of you, and others older

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than you, too, wondered very much at seeing him bring out of his sleeve a bowl full of water with gold-fish in it; then shoot a watch out of a pistol, or fly a dove out of a box; and other tricks of that kind. And all round me I heard: "Oh, I wonder how that is!"—"Wonderful!"—"Never did see the like before!"

Of course not. And you wondered at it, and how the man could do it, because it was out of the common, and strange to you. For, if that man had taught you to do those tricks, you would no longer have wondered at them; because then you could do them yourselves, and would know all about them. Now, men can play such tricks, and many other very clever ones too; but no man can work "a miracle." What is the difference?

"A miracle" is a token of God's power, wrought at once on particular occasions, and for a particular purpose; and miracles were done either by Him or through the power He gave His prophets and apostles to work them—in order that men, seeing the miracles, should believe that those who wrought them came from God.

They were "miracles" or "wonders" only to those who saw them, because they had never seen the like before, and knew they could not be wrought by men, except through God's power. But they were no "miracles" for the prophets and apostles themselves who wrought them, because they knew it was God's power working through them; and they were no miracles for the Saviour, Who

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created all things, Who can do all things, and by Whom all things are held together (*Heb.* i. 2; *Col.* i. 16, 17).

It was easy for Him Who made the eye, to give sight to one born blind, though no man could do it. So also was it easy for Him to heal the man sick of the palsy; to make the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak; the lame to walk, and to raise the dead; though, of course, no man living could do any of it. Because, since He can make all things, He can unmake them also; just like a watchmaker who made a watch: he can take it to pieces, and again put it together.

So He had only to say to the man sick of the palsy, who could not move a limb—"Arise, take up thy bed and go to thine house." And he rose up, and went home. It was all a matter of course for the Saviour, but the people who stood by were all amazed, and glorified God, saying: "We never saw it on this fashion" (*S. Mark*, ii. 12).

So should we, too, children, wonder very much if we were to see such a miracle. But if we saw a dead man rise again, I don't know whether we shouldn't be more frightened than amazed. But why? Because, like the people at Capernaum, "we never saw it on this fashion."

And yet, children, to raise the dead from the grave, is no greater miracle than to raise an ear of wheat out of the corn put into the earth. Our Saviour Himself said so (*S. John*, xii. 24); only we call raising the dead "a miracle," because we never

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see it done; but we think little or nothing of the "wonders" among which we live, because we see them every day.

And yet the holy Apostle tells us that men are without excuse for not seeing God's eternal power in what He made of old, and in what He does every day—that shows that He is, and that He rules the world (*Rom.* i. 20). For His works, the crops and fruitful seasons He gives us, are witnesses of His power and goodness (*Acts*, xiv. 17, xvii. 24, 28).

Thoughtless and foolish people take no notice of these things, and say, "they make themselves," or, that "it is the way of it." "But whoso is wise," says Scripture, "will ponder these things; and they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men" (*Ps.* cvii. 43, 31).

And I know some children who are wise enough to do so; because they are well taught, and properly brought up.

"Look here, Nelly!—do look at my beautiful scarlet pea. I had a pea for ever so long in my pocket, and just before going to aunty's, three months ago, I put it into the ground, and forgot all about it. But now—oh, how lovely!"

—"It is pretty, to be sure."

"Well, but how can such a lovely flower—so red, too—come out of a small black thing like the pea I put in, Nelly?"

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— "Why, it is the way of it, I suppose."

"'The way of it?' What way? There is no way that I can see for this beautiful scarlet flower to come out of that small pea. It must be God's doing. He did it, you know, when he created all things" (*Gen.* i. 11).

"That's what I meant, Emmy, by 'the way of it.'"

"If you meant it, Nelly, you didn't say so, at all events. You said what a good many say, who think things make themselves, and crops grow out of the earth of their own accord. But we are taught better, you know. It is God's doing, and is very wonderful. It would be a miracle, if we were not used to it.

"Oh! but here I have got something far more wonderful than your flower, Emmy," said Harry. "It is a live thing.

"Now, just look! Last holidays, I found a black caterpillar on some nettles, and I put it in a box. I gave it plenty of nettles when I went away, about six weeks ago, and forgot all about it. I have just opened the box, afraid to find the poor caterpillar dead; instead of which—look here! A most beautiful butterfly, not dead either, but alive and fresh.

"Now, this is more wonderful than your scarlet pea, that grew straight out of the pea itself. But how this beautiful butterfly ever came out of that black caterpillar—that had spines too!"

— "Why, it is God's doing. It can't be anything

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else. It couldn't make itself like that, never; but let me look at it, Harry—it is so pretty!"

"See, it opens its wings. Put it in the sun a little bit, and see what it'll do."

"Do?—why, there, it is gone!"

"Oh! how beautifully it flies! now it settles on that flower, and is gone again! Who would have thought that it could come out of a black caterpillar that crawled about, and ate nettles, too?"

"Oh! but I think I can beat you all," said George. "You have got a flower and a butterfly, but I have ten or a dozen live things that run about so, that I can't count them."

—"A dozen what?"

"A dozen live chicks, just hatched, and running about for their very life, with the hen clucking after them. Now, if you tell me how those chicks came out of the same eggs we eat, all soft inside, with a hard shell too, I'll tell you all about your scarlet pea, and peacock butterfly."

—"I don't know a bit."

"Neither do I. I can't tell how ever those chicks—beak, legs, wings, down and all—can come out of the same eggs we eat; how ever that soft stuff is turned into a live chick, that runs about directly it is hatched—there, I can't tell how it is."

Nor anybody else, children. Wise and learned men talk a great deal, and write many books about such things, and pretend to explain them. But all they can do is, after all, only to say, "It is so." But as to the "manner how"—why, and how it is

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done, they can't tell any more than you can, because it is God's work, and God's way; and both His work and His ways are past finding out.

What is that going by on the road? One of you look out of the window.

— A waggon; one of Joe Wheeler's, the wheelwright.

A waggon?—one of Joe Wheeler's?—Oh, but, maybe it made itself. How do you know the nut didn't bore and turn itself, and the spokes, fellies, tires and all, didn't agree to come together and make up a wheel? Two, three, four wheels? and the shafts, pole, timber, iron and all, put itself together, to make up the waggon, without Joe Wheeler's help?

— Oh!

You stare at me, children; and well may you, for talking so much nonsense. But I only said it for you to see what some men, who think themselves very wise, will say about the wonders of God's wisdom and power, around us. They tell you "it is the way of it"—or, "things make themselves."

— They be foolish.

Scripture says, that "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (*Rom.* i. 22). For fools alone say "there is no God" (*Ps.* liii. 1).

Can a waggon make itself?

— No, never.

Can an ear of wheat make itself, and then make itself grow out of the corn put in the earth? or

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an oak out of an acorn, without God's will, wisdom, and care ?

— No, it can't.

Of course not. And that is just as great a wonder as raising a man from the grave; and it requires just the same power.

Only, God ordered it so in the beginning; and as He keeps it going from day to day, by His will, and according to His promise, we take no notice of it. Yet it is as easy for God to raise a dead man to life, as to make a hard seed grow into a flower; or as to turn a crawling caterpillar into a flying butterfly; or as to make a chick out of the yolk and white of the egg you eat for breakfast.

But no man, nor all the wise men on earth together, could make a grain of corn, and make it grow; nor a caterpillar, nor even an egg-shell— let alone the chick inside; no, not even a leaf out of the hedge, nor a blade of grass in the meadow. God alone makes it all; and men only talk about it.

So, then, although we are surrounded by wonders of God's wisdom and power, which we can only admire, but which we can't explain, we do not call them miracles, although they are miracles. But we call "miracles," as I told you, tokens of God's power, out of the common, and wrought for a particular purpose.

Thus the miracles wrought by our Saviour were tokens of His own power as God, which He

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wrought, not only in order to show people who He was, but also to show what miracles He works on our souls by His Holy Spirit.

For, whereas the prophets and the apostles prayed for power to work a miracle—as when Elisha raised the son of the Shunammite (2 *Kings*, iv. 33); or as when John and Peter said to the lame man: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (*Acts*, iii. 6)—the Saviour worked His miracles in His own name and power. As when He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying: "Hold thy peace, and come out of him!" (*S. Mark*, i. 25); or as when He cried with a loud voice to Lazarus in the grave: "Lazarus, come forth!" (*S. John*, xi. 43, 44); or as when He walked on the sea, and stilled the tempest. He did all that through the divine power He had in Himself. He had not, like the prophets and the apostles, to pray for that power, or to work a miracle in any other name but His own. He willed it, and it was done.

But of course, children, when God's enemy, the devil, saw the miracles wrought by Christ and His apostles, he set his own servants to try and do the same; but they could not. Thus Simon, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles (chapter viii.), "bewitched the people of Samaria with sorceries," until they thought He was "the great power of God."

But when he saw that the Holy Ghost was given to those on whom Peter and John laid their

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hands, he offered them money if they would give him the same power—the power that came from God. Then Peter said to him: "Thy money perish with thee: thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore; for I perceive that thou art in the bond of iniquity."

This Simon went afterwards to Rome, where he also bewitched the people with his sorceries, as he had done at Samaria; and was killed when trying to fly from a height to the ground.

And after him, as well as of old in Egypt, when the magicians Jannès and Jambrès withstood Moses for a while, until they could do so no longer, and said: "It is the finger of God,"—there have been, and there are now, men who pretend to work miracles, either themselves or through others.

But they are not miracles. They are mostly tricks played to deceive ignorant and foolish folks. With miracles of this sort we, children, have, at present, nothing to do. There are no true miracles but those wrought by the power of God; which He granted, last of all, to his apostles; and never after; because miracles were no longer wanted to establish the Gospel in the earth.

I will, therefore, try to explain to you the meaning of most of our Saviour's miracles, as I explained to you his parables, some time ago. I know you understood me then; I trust you will understand me also now.

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I.

WATER MADE WINE, AT CANA OF GALILEE.

S. John, ii. 1 *to* 12.

HERE, children, we read that three days after our Lord had been with John the Baptist at Bethabara, beyond Jordan, there was a marriage at Cana of Galilee; and that He, His mother, and His disciples were bidden to it.

It was called Cana of Galilee, to distinguish it from another Cana, a very pretty village among the hills that rise above Tyre, on the coast of Canaan.

But of Cana of Galilee there remains nothing but a few old walls and mounds of rubbish. I have been to both places; but I liked this best; because it was here that our Saviour wrought His first miracle; and also because, having come to it from Nazareth, I saw how near it lay to our Saviour's home; and how much higher up the country it was than Capernaum, on the sea of Galilee; whither our Saviour went down from this Cana, to dwell there some time.

So also, later on, when our Saviour was again

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here at Cana of Galilee, the nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum came to our Lord, and asked him "to come down" and heal his son ere he died.

This wedding was, most likely, among the kindred of the Mother of our Lord; because, in those days, and in that out-of-the-way part of the country, families lived much together. There were no carriage-roads and no carriages, as with us; and as people had to travel, the bettermost on horseback, but the poor almost always on foot, they did not travel far, but mostly kept together.

Now Cana of Galilee is but a few miles from Nazareth; it is not far from Sephurieh, where Anna, the Blessed Virgin's mother, lived; and this again is only a few miles from Nazareth. So you see, children, those relations lived pretty close together. Nay, there is a tradition,—but, first, what is a "tradition?"

—A story?

Well, a tradition often is "a story," if you mean a tale that is not true—or one that is. But a tradition means anything—be it a story, or a teaching, or some saying that is handed down by word of mouth among people, and for which there is no proof. Only people say, and have said so-and-so, for a great many years.

Your granny, Ellen, said in my hearing: "My grandmother used to say."—That must have been a long time ago; for she is turned eighty, and her own grandmother was as old. Now, if you tell

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others what she told you, you will hand down that "tradition" to others.

Well, then, there is a tradition in the Church, that this marriage at Cana was S. John's wedding; and that he was so struck with our Saviour's miracle, and so won by His sweet voice and manner, that he gave up his bride and followed Him.

Here again, children, John was, you know, a son of Zebedee; and there is also a tradition that Zebedee lived at Yafa, a pretty little village close to Nazareth. So that, most likely, our Saviour and John became friends when children; or, at all events, were acquainted with each other, ere the Saviour called him and his brother from their fishing-nets, by the sea of Galilee.

Our Saviour, then, came with His disciples to the wedding—not all of them, but perhaps only Philip, and Nathanael who, had just followed Him, and who also was of this place (*S. John*, xxi. 2). But as, no doubt, the house was a poor one, and the marriage-feast was scanty, all the wine they had was soon done, and there was none to be got.

So our Lord's Mother said to Him, "They have no wine." No doubt she had seen Him, before this, work wonders which are not told in the Gospels—though, maybe, not the same that have been handed down by tradition—and she knew He might help them, if He would.

But He said to her: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come."

He called her "woman," and not "mother," not

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from want of respect assuredly, since He rebuked the Pharisees for "making of none effect God's commandment: Honour thy father and thy mother" (*S. Matt.* xv. 3-7). But He addressed her as "woman"—first, according to the custom and language of the country, which are more homely than our own; especially among the poor, who address one another as man, woman, father, uncle, mother, son, daughter, &c., though in nowise related.

And secondly—our Lord addressed His Mother as "woman," because, though she had spoken to Him as her son, He, being about to work a miracle as God, answered her as Son of God. Therefore did He say: "What have I to do with thee"—as to giving them some wine? I can only make it and give it, as Son of my Father, God; but not as son of thee, woman.

But whether or not His Mother understood His meaning, she said to the servants, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it"—as if she was well known to them, and familiar in the house.

Now, there were there six water-pots, every one holding about twenty gallons, that were used by the Jews for washing. Our Saviour told the servants to fill them with water up to the brim, and they did so.

He then said to them: "Draw out now,"—and they drew. But don't you think, children, that they must have stared, when they found that it was not the water they had poured in, but wine?

So they took some of it "to the governor of the feast"—to him who had the management of it.

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When he had tasted this wine, he called the bridegroom, who provided everything for the feast, and said to him: "Every man gives the best wine first; and when men have drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the best until now" —because he did not know whence this wine had come.

This was the first miracle our Saviour wrought after His baptism in Jordan, when He first began His ministry—that is, going about preaching the glad tidings of salvation through Him; healing the sick and working miracles, to show that His doctrine—that is, His teaching, the Gospel He preached—was not His own, but was from Heaven. So, when His disciples saw this miracle, "they believed on Him." But what does it teach us?

Several things; two, however, will do for you, little people.

First—we learn that our Blessed Saviour does not forbid our meeting to eat and drink together, and enjoy ourselves at feasts, since He came Himself to one, "which He adorned and beautified with His presence." But then we must do it as in the presence of Him, "Who gives us all things richly to enjoy;" and forbids us nothing that is good. Then we shall be "temperate in all things"—that is, we shall not take more than is good for us; but we shall know when to say "enough;" and thus to "let our moderation be known of all men; the Lord being at hand."

As you may suppose, children, everything at

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that feast was very orderly, in presence of the Saviour.

— Please sir, it says they were drunk.

Drunk! Read again, my boy, and see.

— "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk"—

Stop—"when men have well drunk," does not mean that "they were drunk."

The governor of the feast only spoke of the general custom at feasts, which was this: As the wine in that country, and in all hot countries, is very strong, like port, sherry, and such wines, men could not drink much of it pure. So they used, as they do now, to mix water with it, in order to drink more, and longer too. The best mixture was served first, and when men had well drunk, then that which was worse. But the wine our Saviour gave them, was better and purer than any they had tasted that day.

And secondly, children, we learn from this miracle, by which our Saviour turned so large a quantity of water into good wine, that He does not forbid us the use of it, nor anywhere command us to drink water only. On the contrary; it is He Who "bringeth forth grass for the cattle and green herb for the service of man; that He may bring food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man; and oil to make him a cheerful countenance, and bread to strengthen man's heart" (*Ps.* civ. 14, 15).

You see, children, it is the same Lord Who gives

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us oil and wine as well as bread; "Who opens His hand, and fills His creatures with good" (v. 28), and denies them nothing: "For every creature of God," says S. Paul, "is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer" (1 *Tim.* iv. 4, 5).

But we are to make a good use of His gifts, and not a bad one. Therefore does He also say to us: "Be not among winebibbers, among riotous eaters of flesh. For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty; and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags" (*Prov.* xxiii. 20, 21),

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II.

THE NOBLEMAN'S SON AT CAPERNAUM.

S. John, iv. 43-54.

THE marriage feast at Cana of Galilee took place in March; and in the following May, our Saviour was again there, where He probably had friends or relatives.

While He was there, a nobleman, or "courtier," —perhaps one of Herod's household—a rich man living at Capernaum, who had a son lying at home sick of a fever, came to the Saviour, and entreated Him to come down and heal his son, who was at the point of death.

You remember, children, what I told you about Capernaum, when I was explaining to you our Lord's parables. "Capernaum" means, you know, a "beautiful" or "comfortable" village, so called because it lay on the banks of the sea of Galilee, on the plain of Genesareth; so warm, so fruitful, and so pleasant, that people came to it from all parts of the country to spend the winter and spring of the year.

It was also said to be our Saviour's "own city," because He spent there a great part of His life on earth.

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This nobleman, then, had no doubt seen our Lord, and had heard of the miracle He had wrought at Cana of Galilee, a few miles up the country, only two months before. And as this nobleman's son—perhaps his only son—lay dangerously ill, he thought he would go himself, and beg the Saviour to come and heal him. He would not trust anyone else to go, because no one felt for the sick child as he did; and no one else would ask and beg for him so earnestly as he would.

So he came, and besought the Saviour to come down and heal his son, who was not expected to live.

Then said Jesus unto him: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."

He did not say this, however, in rebuke; but He only meant that, unless they saw signs and wonders from Him, to show who He was, they would not believe in Him.

And we can't wonder at it much. He, and all His relations with Him, had lived among them, and they knew Him as "the carpenter's son." And as He was only just beginning to go about the country, and to become known for something more than "the carpenter's son," they could not make it out, but asked: "Whence does all this wisdom come, and those mighty works in Him?" So that His own people, and His brethren even, were slow, if not the last, to believe in Him as the Son of God, the Saviour; because they had known Him all His life, and were used to Him. Whereas those who heard

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Him speak, and saw Him work a miracle for the first time, were struck with it, as this nobleman was.

For all he could answer the Saviour was: "Sir, come down ere my child die." Do this first, I pray Thee: and after that, say what Thou wilt; I am Thy servant.

So the Blessed Saviour did not keep him waiting a moment longer, but said: "Go thy way, thy son liveth."

The man believed Him, and went at once; without asking another question. And glad enough, children, you may be sure.

But as he was going down to Capernaum, his servants met him, and brought him the good news that his son was not dead, but alive and well.

They must have been astonished to see the child get well all at once, they knew not how, and after everything had been done for him;—for that nobleman had the best doctors; yet all was of no avail. So they left home in haste to meet their master, and tell him, "Thy son liveth."

He then asked them, at what time he began to get better?

"Yesterday," said they, "at the seventh hour, the fever left him." That was one o'clock of our time—about the time it would take that nobleman to ride on horseback from Capernaum to Cana of Galilee. In May, the weather is not yet very hot; so if he started about six in the morning, as he would not halt, and could only ride at a brisk walking pace over rough roads, he would reach our

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Saviour's abode about noon; and he then would tell Him at once what He was come for.

And the Saviour, seeing the father's faith, and in pity for his grief, willed at once that the child should not die, but live. His will was enough. He willed, and one of His angels flew, and scared sickness from the house, and death from the child. He said therefore: "Thy son liveth;" it is done.

The nobleman believed it, and went; but he only knew that it was so, when his servants told him the time at which the fever left the child. He then received the reward of his trust in the Saviour; and believed in Him.

Now, children, what does that miracle teach you?

First, how ready the Saviour was to hear the poor father's prayer, and to grant it. But why? Because He saw that man had faith in Him, that He could and would heal his son; since He had come all that way himself to ask Him. So also did the Saviour in many like instances, as we shall see.

Secondly, you see that the Saviour healed the child without going to see him, and from a long way off. And since "He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever" (*Heb.* xiii. 8), He can do the same now.

How often does He show mercy on us, and send us help from His high heaven, when we are sick, or troubled, or sorry about anything? When we can't help ourselves, and are in trouble—if we go

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to Him in prayer, as that nobleman did, believing that He can hear us, and will help us if He think fit—how often has He sent one of His angels to help us—one of those who are His ministering spirits, which He sends forth to minister—that is, to serve and to help them that shall be "heirs of salvation" (*Heb.* i. 14)—those that love and obey Him? How often has He sent one of them to help us, by making a way for us out of our troubles!

Now, I remember how, not so very long ago, you, Nelly, were so ill, poor little woman, that mother was in great trouble about you. The doctor came, and was very kind, and did his best; but his best could not have saved you, if God had not done it, in pity for you, so ill, and for mother, who wept all day long about her poor little daughter she couldn't bear to lose. But she prayed also; and as she prayed in earnest, because she wished you to live and not die, her prayer was heard on high. The Saviour had pity on mother, as He had on the widow of Nain, and said to her, "Weep not" (*S. Luke*, vii. 11-16); and as He raised that poor widow's son, and gave him back to his mother, so also did He raise poor little Nelly from her bed of sickness, and gave her back to mother.

But in order thus to receive help from Him in time of need, children, what must we do?

— Pray?

Yes, pray;—but how? as if we didn't care about it, or as if we wished it very much?

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— As if we wished it very much.

But, as we don't know what is best for us, we may wish very much for what might do us more harm than good. Would God grant it then?

— No.

Sometimes he might. When we are very much bent on having our own way, and forget when we pray to say, "if it be Thy holy will," then He may let us have our own way, and get what we wish for so very much. But we soon feel sorry for it, and wish we had had His way, instead of our own.

How then ought we to pray, children?

Always say as our Saviour did:

"If it be possible, let this trouble pass from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done." And then, we may be sure that He will order everything, not as we wish, perhaps—but for the best.

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III.

CASTING OUT UNCLEAN SPIRITS.

S. Luke, iv. 81-87.

OUR Saviour had come down from Nazareth to Capernaum, and on the Sabbath day He went into the synagogue, and taught.

What was that synagogue?

— A church where they went Sundays?

Not exactly, though something like it. "Synagogue" means a gathering or congregation; and "congregation," you know, means people gathering together, like a flock.

A synagogue, then, was the building in which the Jews used to come together on Sabbath days, to hear the law read and explained to them by some rabbi, or learned doctor there. But if one had anything to say, by way of teaching the people present, he stood up, and, with leave from the "ruler of the synagogue," he spoke (*Acts*, xiii. 15).

It was our Saviour's custom, to go into the synagogue of the town or village in which He happened to be on Sabbath days; and most times He taught there, as He did at Nazareth, where they were so angry with Him for what He said to them, that

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they thrust Him out of the synagogue, and tried to throw Him down the rock on which the city is built (*S. Luke*, iv. 16-30).

So also here, at Capernaum, He went into a synagogue on a Sabbath day. And there was there a man possessed with a spirit of an unclean devil, who cried out, "Let alone, what have we to do with Thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art; the Holy One of God."

Now, was it not very strange, children, that that unclean spirit of a devil should have known the Saviour, and called Him by His name, "the Holy One of God,"—when no one else in the synagogue, perhaps, knew as much; but looked upon Him only as "the carpenter's son," and one of themselves?

It did look strange; and people were amazed at the devil crying aloud and being cast out, because they did not understand what it all meant.

But it meant this: as our Saviour came "that He might destroy the works of the devil, Satan" (*S. John*, iii. 8), God's enemy and our own, Satan was more angry than ever, when the Saviour was on earth destroying his works; and so were his host of devils, or unclean spirits, that were going about among men.

But, what are the works of the devil our Lord came to destroy?

— Wickedness?

— Drunkenness and swearing?

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— Sin?

These and many other wickednesses, all works of the devil, which our Saviour came to put an end to by, first of all, being stronger than the devil, and getting the better of him, from the beginning,—what beginning, think ye?

— When the devil tempted Him?

Not that, farther back. When the devil, "that old serpent" (*Rev.* xii. 9), tempted Eve, and brought sin into the world, by making Adam and Eve sin, and thus be driven from Paradise; so that they could not return to it.

But our Saviour came to undo all that, by taking upon Himself our human nature, like one of us, and as man, suffering for us and instead of us, and making satisfaction to God for our sins. And as He overcame the devil, and death, by rising again from the dead, and going up to Heaven to prepare a place for us, He thus made a way for us back to Paradise, and into the presence of God. Therefore is He "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (*S. John*, xiv. 6).

Therefore, also, does the devil hate Him for having made a way for us to Heaven; and as the devil is a liar and the father of lies (*S. John*, viii. 44), he hates Christ for being the Truth; and as Satan brought death, "which is the wages of sin," he hates the Saviour for being "the Life"—for "having life everlasting in Himself," and "giving it to us" (*S. John*, i. 4; x. 27, 28; xvii. 3).

Satan knew all this, and a great deal more,

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about Christ, of whom he and his devils in hell, often talked together; because Satan also knows that, although he is "the prince of this world" (*S. John*, xiv. 40), "which is now delivered unto him" (*S. Luke*, iv. 6), it is only for a while, and that "he shall be cast out" (*S. John*, xii. 31) with his hosts; and that Christ shall reign for ever as King of kings, to whose reign there will be no end.

That is how those devils knew Him, and why they asked Him "if He was come to torment them before the time" (*S. Matt.* viii. 29); when they will no longer be allowed to lead men into sin. But the Saviour showed them His authority and power over them, by commanding them to come out of those they possessed.

Thus did He rebuke this one, saying: "Hold thy peace, and come out of him." And that unclean devil obeyed, and came out of the man at once, without hurting him.

But as you may suppose, children, people wondered very much at it. They said: "What a word is this, for with authority and power"—as lord over them, stronger than they—"He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out?" (*S. Luke*, iv. 36).

From this miracle, children, we learn several things.

First—that our Saviour went regularly to the synagogue every Sabbath day. The temple at Jerusalem was the cathedral, and Jerusalem was the cathedral town; and the synagogues, in almost

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every town and village of the land, were like our parish churches.

Our Saviour, then, did not set up a synagogue of His own, or hold a meeting in His own house, on Sabbath days; although He would have had better right to do so than anyone else; but He went to the parish church, to the synagogue, full of people who hated Him, and wished to put Him to death. You see He was not a dissenter or non-conformist; but He went, even with demoniacs, to the national church, and worshipped, taught, and wrought miracles in it. He did not think Himself too good to go with the rest; but in all these things He conformed to the custom of the country; and set us an example in this respect also.

Secondly—we see also, that unclean spirits knew Him, and professed Him, calling Him by His name, and yet remained devils for all that. As S. James says, "The devils also believe in God and tremble" (*Ep.* ii. 19); so that it is not merely saying, "Lord, Lord," that will bring us to Heaven; but doing "the will of our Father which is in Heaven" (*S. Matt.* vii. 21). Our holy talk of the lips is no good unless it come from the heart that loves and fears God. We may know the Bible by heart, and repeat the Creed every day of our life; if we do not "believe in the heart unto righteousness" (*Rom.* x. 10), it will profit us nothing. For "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (*S. Jam.* ii. 26).

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Thirdly—children, we see that our Saviour, Who is the same to-day as He was then, is able and willing to cast wickedness out of our hearts.

Although we do not now see men possessed with devils, quite in the same way as those our Saviour cast out, yet, as sin is the same—as the heart is the same as when the prophet Jeremiah said, it is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," (*Jer.* xvii. 9), whence, our Saviour says, "proceed all manner of evil thoughts, that defile us" (*S. Mark*, vii. 21-23); and as "our great adversary, Satan, still goeth about as of old, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 *Pet.* v. 8), whom we must resist if we do not mean to be devoured by him—we need "watch and pray," little people, "that we enter not into temptation" (*S. Matt.* xxvi. 41), but be able to resist him.

That is what makes a difference between one man and another. Those who "watch"—who take care of themselves, lest they sin against God—show it in their lives. Those who live carelessly—"without God in the world"—show it also. They serve the devil without restraint, and he makes them his own. They go from bad to worse, until they feel neither ashamed of their wickedness, nor afraid of the judgment to come. This is being possessed with a devil, even worse than those our Saviour cast out. For they knew Him, but these do not.

Yet the Saviour is able to cast out these also, if they will but come to Him, and say from the

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heart: Lord, Thou hast both authority and power over unclean spirits; rid me of mine, for Thy Name's sake.

And He will do it, if the prayer comes from the heart.

Remember the thief on the cross; he was bad enough; yet the Saviour forgave him at once, because he said from the heart: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom" (*S. Luke*, xxiii. 42, 43).

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IV.

THE HEALING OF PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW.

St. Luke, iv. 38 *to the end.*

OUR Saviour, you see, children, after leaving the synagogue, went with Andrew, James, and John (*S. Mark*, i. 29) into Peter's house, where his mother-in-law lay sick of a fever.

But He took her by the hand, and the fever left her. She then got up, and, feeling quite well, she waited on the Saviour, and on those who were with Him.

Our Saviour had not yet called Peter and the other three to be apostles, although they had met before.

You remember, children, that Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was a disciple of John the Baptist, whom he heard say, pointing to the Saviour: "Behold the Lamb of God." Andrew then followed Him, and remained with Him that day. Afterwards he found his brother Simon, and brought him to the Saviour, who then told him he should be called "Cepha,"—the same as "Peter"—that means "a stone," or "rock," in the language our Lord and His disciples spoke.

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After that, both Andrew and Simon Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, went back to their fishing on the lake, between Capernaum and Bethsaida,—that means "a fishing-place"—some two or three miles farther north. Bethsaida was, you know, the native place of Peter and Andrew; but Peter had, it seems, a house—a very small one, children—at Capernaum; or maybe, it was his wife's property that went by his name.

Now, what should you say, children, was most wonderful in that miracle of our Saviour?

— His goodness?

He was good, of course; but I don't mean that. Now, think. When you, Robert, who were so ill the other day, began to recover, did you get well all at once?

— No; it took me some time to get better.

How long?

— Why, weeks. And I am not so very well now.

Of course, it takes longer to get well than to get ill, both in body and in soul, my boy. One is struck down in a moment by an illness it may take months to shake off; so is one often led by bad example into bad habits, it may take a whole lifetime to get rid of; and perhaps never quite forget.

Well, but Simon's wife's mother got well all at once, and so quickly, too, that she got up, and waited on the Saviour and the other guests. The fever could not stand the grasp of His hand, but left the woman at once.

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Now, you remember, little people, that our Lord's miracles wrought on the bodies of people, were also a figure of those He then worked, and now does work, on the souls of men. Can you, then, remember another poor woman, very sick at heart, whose heart the kind Saviour healed also at once?

— The Syro—

The Syrophenician woman? It is a hard word for you, poor little Emma—but I don't mean her. Think again.

— The woman that wept behind our Saviour—

— And washed His feet with her tears?

That is the one. She was very, very sick at heart, for she had been a very bad woman; but the Saviour saw by her tears that she was very, very sorry; her heart ached so that she couldn't speak, and He knew that. So He said to her at once: "Thy sins are forgiven . . . go in peace" (*S. Luke*, vii. 48-50).

You see, children, this was another cure of a far worse disease than fever. It was healing the plague of a heart broken by sin, sorrow, and repentance; and that is just what our merciful Saviour said He was come to do—"to heal the broken-hearted" (*S. Luke*, iv. 18; *Isaiah*, lvii. 15), and "to preach good tidings to the meek" (*Isaiah*, lxi. 1).

And as He never was weary of doing the work His Father had set Him to do, that same Sabbath day on which He cast out the devil and healed Simon's mother-in-law, a great many that were

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sick, and had unclean spirits, came to Him after sunset, and He healed them all. But why after sunset?

— Because it wasn't so hot?

That is one reason; but also because the Sabbath, that was reckoned from Friday at sunset to Saturday at sunset, was then over. So the Pharisees and scribes could not find fault with the poor for carrying their sick, as they did with the infirm man our Saviour healed at the pool of Bethesda, for carrying his bed on the Sabbath day (*S. John*, v. 9, 10, 16).

And S. Matthew tells us that this was all in fulfilment of the prophet's words: "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (*S. Matt.* viii. 17; *Isaiah*, liii. 4).

He took them away, by healing them; but it also means that He took them upon Himself, to know how sore they are, and to feel for us when we suffer. For "He is our great High Priest, who is passed into the heavens—and who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; for He was in all points tempted—or tried—like as we are; yet without sin.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy; and find grace to help in every time of need" (*Heb.* iv. 14-16).

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V.

THE DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

S. Luke, v. 1-12.

HERE we read, children, that the people so pressed upon our Saviour to hear Him preach the Word of God, that He got into one of two fishing-boats lying close to the beach. That boat belonged to Simon Peter, whom the Lord asked to thrust out the boat a little from the land; and He taught the people from it.

When He had done speaking, He told Simon to launch out into the deep water for a draught—that is, to catch fish with his nets.

Simon said to Him: "Master, we have toiled all night"—which is the best time for catching fish, because they don't see the net—"and have caught nothing; nevertheless, at Thy word I will let down the net."

It was a long net like those you see at the harbour, children. Some of you may have seen fishermen at work there; some drying their nets, others mending them; others again, out at sea letting down their nets for a draught.

— I have. They fold the net and pile it up on one end of the boat, and let it drop into the sea, while they keep on rowing.

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How do they row?—straight on?

— No; they row round about, and come back pretty near to where they started.

And at each end of the net there is a long rope—sometimes two—which men pull ashore when they fish in shallow water; but when out at sea, they haul the net into the boat. And as there must always be men at each end of the net, to draw it in, fishermen go out a-fishing in small companies: they are what are called "partners"—that is, they work together, and then "part" among themselves the money they get for their fish.

John and James, the sons of Zebedee, were thus partners with Simon, and went out with him, when our Saviour told him to do so. So you read that when Simon had let down the net at our Saviour's word, it caught so many fish that it brake.

Simon then called to his partners James and John, who were in another boat, not far off, to come and help him. They came, and filled their two boats with the fish, so full that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw that wonderful haul of fish, caught in the very same place where he had not caught one all night, he fell at the Saviour's knees, and said: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He had met the Saviour, and had heard Him, and had seen Him heal his mother-in-law. But Peter did not "take it all in," as people say, until it came to him in his own calling.

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That lake teemed with fish then as it does now. You sometimes see shoals of fish spread over several acres of water. You tell them by their fins peeping above water, and seagulls flying over them. So that Simon, go where he would, might have been pretty sure to catch fish enough that night, to sell in the market of Capernaum the next morning.

But of course our Saviour knew what would happen, and He ordered it all.

Simon and his partners had caught nothing that night, and were not thinking of going out to fish by day. Because it was the month of June, when the sun is so hot there, that not only can fishers not work by day, but even fish leave the shallow water that is too warm, and take to deep water that is cooler; but where also, they can't be caught with a net.

So that, to catch such a haul of fish, at the worst time of day, where Simon had caught nothing during the night, was a miracle indeed, that amazed him and his partners, because it came home to them, and was of their craft.

Simon, then, and the others, were not only amazed, but half-afraid too; for they didn't know what to make of it. The Saviour then said to them: "Fear not, from henceforth you shall catch men;"—or, as we read in S. Matthew, "I will make you fishers of men"—which means the same thing. "Then they forsook all, and followed Him."

Now this, children—their forsaking everything—their homes, their fishing-boats and nets—their

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livelihood in short, to go with Him, they knew not whither—was almost as wonderful as the draught of fishes. What made them do it?

— Because they thought they would always catch plenty of fish?

— How could they catch, if they went about, man?

Don't nudge him like that, Jem. But if you know better, tell me what it was that made those poor, hardworking fishers, leave all they had in the world, and follow Christ.

— Was it because they thought they should never want anything with Him, who had made water wine, and had just given them two boat-fuls of fish?

That might be some of it, perhaps, but not all of it. They felt themselves drawn to Him, and by Him. This miracle showed them "that God was with Him;" and although they knew little of Him, yet they knew enough to make them feel they were safer with Him than by themselves. So they didn't take long to consider; but gave up all at once, and followed Him. Can you tell me of some one else who did very much the same thing?

— Abraham?

Yes; Abraham, who left his country and kindred and all he had, to go—he knew not whither—but where God told him. Did he lose anything by that?

— No; he gained much. God blessed him,

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called him His friend, and told him that all nations of the earth should be blessed in him.

Not a bad answer for a boy of your age. But what did that mean?

— You told us it meant that the Saviour of the world should be a son of his; and should send His Gospel to all people.

Of course. Can you remember anyone else who also left everything when the Saviour called him?

— The son of Levi.

— Matthew, at the receipt of customs.

Very good. Now, tell me, did these poor fishers and the publican lose anything by following the Saviour?

When He said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God,"—and the disciples wondered at it, because, like other poor people, they thought those who have money can do everything, what did Peter say to Him? "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have, therefore?"

"And Jesus said unto them: Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration"—that is, in the "new heavens and the new earth" (2 *Pet.* iii. 13), "when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (*S. Matt.* xix. 27, 28).

He also said to them another time: "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temp-

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tations"—that is, in My trials—"And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table, in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (*S. Luke*, xxii. 28-30). You see, children, what they got for having left their nets and fishing-boats to follow the Saviour.

Does it mean, then, that we ought to do the same?

— Yes.

— No.

You are both right. Of course we are not fishers to leave our nets, nor yet apostles; and we do not see the Saviour, and do not walk about the country with Him, as they did. And He does not expect that of us.

But for us "to forsake all and follow Him," means—to love Him most, and to keep His commandments (*S. John*, xiv. 15). For we cannot serve two masters, you know—love this world and the things of this world much, and the Saviour much. We must love one of the two most, and serve that one. And God does not care to have only half our heart. Could the apostles have kept on fishing every day, and yet have gone about with the Saviour?

— No, they couldn't.

Of course not. They had to choose between Him and their nets; and they chose Him; and they have got their reward—better than their nets, don't you think?

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Therefore does the Saviour say to us: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things"—food and raiment—"shall be added unto you" (*S. Matt.* vi. 33).

But although we learn from this miracle that we too must follow the Saviour, as well as His disciples, though not in the same way—the miracle was chiefly meant for them.

They were fishers by trade—but they were to become fishers of men; to go and preach the Gospel, and bring into the Church people of all nations upon earth. You remember the parable of the net cast into the sea, which, also, the Saviour spake to them. It gathered good and bad fish, that were sorted on the beach" (*S. Matt.* xiii. 47-49).

Such is the preaching of the Gospel in the Church upon earth. At the end of the world only, shall the good and the bad be put asunder. No one can do it now, while the net is still in the sea, and is being drawn ashore. We must wait until all the fish are taken, and the net is brought to land; and then God's angels "shall come forth, and sever the wicked from the just."

Then, the apostles had caught nothing during the night. What does this mean?

But first—what is the Saviour called by the prophet Malachi? (*Mal.* iv. 2.)

"The Sun—

— Of Righteousness, with healing in his wings."

Right; but what is meant by "the wings of the Sun?" His rays, of course; they come from

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him to you, and bring you his light and his warmth. So also the Gospel, or glad tidings of salvation through Christ, "brought to light"—made clear—"life and immortality" (2 *Tim.* i. 10), that is—that we shall be saved from death, and have everlasting life through Him. This good news, thus made plain to us, warms our souls, and heals them of the plague of sin.

But in the night, before the sun rises, we use candles to see in the dark.

So also the time before the Saviour came, before the Sun of Righteousness arose upon this world, was like night before the day. During that dark time, God sent His prophets to tell the people the Sun would rise, when night was past; but their word, though bright, was not so clear as the Gospel—"it was like a light that shineth in a dark place" (2 *Pet.* i. 19), not so bright as the Sun, of course.

During that long night, when the prophets worked, the apostles, who were not born, caught nothing—brought no one to Christ's Church; how could they?

But now they are told "to launch out into the deep," and by day-time too, under the blazing rays of the Sun of Righteousness—that is, to go far away into all the world, and win great many souls of men sunk in darkness and ignorance; until their boats—that represent the Church sailing on the waters of this world—are full, and brought safe ashore in the kingdom of God.

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You now see, children, that the apostles—when sent by the Saviour to bring people of all nations into his Church, by teaching them and baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost—only finished the work the prophets had begun, when they prophesied that all this would happen.

That is what the Saviour meant when he said to them:

"One soweth and another reapeth." "I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men"—the prophets—"laboured, and ye are entered into their labours."—"And he that reapeth receiveth wages,"—gets the benefit of the sower's work—"and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together" (*S. John*, iv. 36-38).

And so it is. For the Church to which you, children, belong, "is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone" (*Eph.* ii. 20).

But tell me—who caught all that fish?

— Peter, at our Lord's bidding.

And his partners—

— Helped to bring it in.

What does this mean?—Read *Eph.* iv. 11, 20.

— "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

"For the perfecting of the saints; for the work of the ministry; for the edifying of the body of Christ."

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Now these evangelists, pastors and teachers, are partners with the apostles, so long as they preach and teach the same Gospel as the apostles; and not their own. So they help to bring souls to Christ, caught in the net of His Gospel, as taught by Him and His apostles.

So we are of the fish caught by Peter at our Lord's bidding; but we are being brought ashore in the partners' boat.

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VI.

THE LEPER CLEANSED.

S. Matt. viii. 1-5.

HERE we read that, as our Saviour came down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him to hear more of his teaching; and some also, perhaps, to be healed of their diseases.

Among these was a leper, who came, worshipped Him by touching the ground on which He trod, and said: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

Now, none of you, children, ever saw a leper, because, thank God, leprosy is a plague we very seldom see in this part of the world; but in the Holy Land, where our Saviour lived, it was, and is still, very common.

It clings to the body, which it destroys by degrees, until a poor leper loses his toes, fingers, hands, nose and eyes, and looks a most wretched being.

As there is no cure for it, and as it is handed down in families from father to son, lepers are shunned by everybody, and made to live by themselves, away from the rest. They sit together sometimes by the way-side, or in the gate at the entrance of a town, to beg for alms of the passers-

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by. But alms are thrown to them as to dogs, and those who come in at the gate, tuck up their garments, lest they should come near or touch the lepers. Then again, leprosy sometimes looks white; and this on a dark skin is hideous.

One of these miserable creatures, then, made his way through the crowd that fled from him, to the Saviour, and fell at His feet. "Lord," said he, "if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."—See how loathsome I am; everybody goes from me; but Thou—have pity on Thy creature, wretched as it is, and make me clean.

No sooner had he said this, than the merciful Saviour put forth His hand and touched him whom everybody else avoided, saying: "I will, be thou clean." And immediately his leprosy left him, and he was clean.

There, children, see how quickly it was all done. The poor leper draws near, pours forth his prayer: "If thou wilt,"—look upon so loathsome a creature as I am—"Thou canst"—for nothing is impossible to Thee—"make me"—guilty as I am—"clean" of my plague. And it was done. "I will," said the Saviour, and that was enough; the leprosy fled from him, as the fever did from the nobleman's son at Capernaum; and the poor leper was cleansed.

But why did the Saviour touch him? Couldn't He have cleansed him without touching him? He didn't touch or go near the nobleman's son, for He was a long way off, but only willed that the fever should leave him; and it left. Why, then,

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did the Saviour touch this leper; and why did He tell him, before he told anybody of his being cleansed, to go, "show himself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them?"

Let me try to explain it to you.

The holy Apostle tells us that "the law"—that is, the laws and ordinances given by God, through Moses, to the children of Israel—"was only the shadow of good things to come, but the body"—that which casts the shadow—"is of Christ" (*Heb.* x. 1; *Col.* ii. 17). Thus the daily sacrifice in the Tabernacle was only a shadow, so to speak, of the sacrifice of Christ; as the Passover was a shadow of His death and resurrection; and so on.

Therefore does the Saviour Himself say: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (*S. Matt.* v. 17).

Now the shadow of a thing does not tell you much of that thing, does it? The shadow of the house on the ground does not tell you the size of the windows, nor the colour of the wall, &c.; neither does the shadow of your own head against the wall tell the colour of your hair, or of your eyes; it only shows the outline in black.

Well, one of those "shadows of good things to come," was the high priest, who was a figure of our own High Priest, Christ, who made us "a royal priesthood," "kings and priests unto God, and His Father" (1 *Pet.* ii. 5, 9; *Rev.* i. 5, 6).

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You will understand this better, children, when you are older; for the present turn over to the fourteenth chapter of Leviticus, where you will see that there was no other remedy for leprosy but the sacrifices offered by the priest; to whom the leper was to bring a lamb, some fine flour and oil, and a pair of turtle doves for his cleansing (v. 20-22).

Do you now see why the Saviour told the leper to go at once to the priest—who had not offered any sacrifice for his cleansing—and to "offer the gift" Moses ordered in this same chapter of Leviticus?

He was told to do it "for a testimony" to the priest and to the people of the place—as a witness or token—first, that the leper had been cleansed by the touch of Him who is the true High Priest; and secondly, that He commanded the leper to bring to the priest the gift due to him, to show that He, Christ, came not to destroy the law of Moses, but to fulfil it.

But, children, what do you think is the meaning of this miracle as regards ourselves?

Leprosy is to the body, a figure of what sin is to the soul. There was no other cure for it but the sprinkling of blood, sacrifice, offerings, and the touch of the priest. Neither is there any other cleansing of our souls from sin that clings to them, but through the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, when He offered Himself, who is the Lamb of God, in sacrifice for us upon the Cross.

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He did that once for all. But, children, how can we feel His touch, to drive away sin and wickedness from our hearts? For we are always tempted to do evil, by the sin which is in us.

— Pray to Him?

Yes; come to Him in our heart, which He sees, and knows, with all that is in it; and do what the poor leper did—worship Him—feel humble and lowly before Him. And then say to Him, as the leper also said: "Lord,"—Saviour, Friend of poor sinners like me—"if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean" of my sin and wickedness.

And, children, the Blessed Saviour will not keep you waiting, any longer than He kept the poor leper, whom He touched, and said: "I will, be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

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VII.

HEALING THE MAN SICK OF THE PALSY.

S. Mark, ii. 1-18.

IT was early in March, in the second year of our Saviour's ministry on earth, that He happened to be in the house where He used to live at Capernaum.

No sooner did the people hear of it, than they flocked in and out of the house where He was; and there was such a crowd about the door, that no one could get at Him. It was a carpenter's house, or at all events, a very poor one.

How do we know it was a poor one? I'll tell you.

You have just read that, when the men who bare on a litter the man sick of the palsy, found they could not get in at the door, they carried him up on the roof, and when they had uncovered it, and broken it up, "they let down the bed on which he lay." That house, then, was like what the houses of poor people in that country are now. It had one room only, for the family and everything else. It was about ten or twelve feet high, and there

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was, near the door, a flight of rough steps to the roof, that was flat, and made of trunks of trees laid across, with hurdles and small branches or reeds, upon which a thick coating of mud and gravel, or tiling, was laid.

When there, they removed the coating of mud and gravel, and broke some of the wood under it, and thus let down the sick man through the roof or tiling, into the house, in front of the Saviour. Now they could not have done so in a rich house, that would have been much higher and better built.

When the Saviour saw their faith, He said to the sick man: "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee."

But how could He see their faith? For faith is in the heart; like love or hatred. We can't see it with our eyes.

— He saw what they did; how they went upon the roof and broke it up.

— And it was hard work to do. It was half a day's work, maybe.

No, not so much. But you are right. The Saviour saw they were so bent on bringing to Him the sick man—perhaps their own father—because they believed He could and would heal him, as He had cleansed the leper a few weeks before—that when they found they couldn't get in at the door, they would not be balked, but they went up on the roof, took a deal of trouble, and rested not until they had let down the sick man safe before the Saviour. Now, if they had not had faith in Him

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and in His goodness, they would not have taken the trouble, first, to bring the sick man, perhaps, a long way; and then to break up the roof of the house, and also to pay for it, no doubt.

So, then, their work showed their faith, as S. James says—(*Ep.* ii. 20-26)—"Faith wrought with their work;" and that work "made it perfect," that is, it showed that their faith in the Saviour was true—in the heart, and not on the lips only.

But certain Scribes and Pharisees who were standing there, said: "Why doth this man"—meaning the Saviour—"speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?"

They said so because, of course, they did not believe in Him.

But He knew their thoughts, and in order to show them that "He had power to forgive sins, He said to the sick of the palsy"—who could not move a limb—"Arise, and take up thy bed, and go into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up his bed, and went forth before them all, insomuch that they were all amazed." But if the Scribes and Pharisees murmured, the people, at all events, "glorified God, saying: We never saw it on this fashion."

Of course, children, you understand that, if none but God can forgive sins, none also but He can make a man sick of the palsy—a paralytic, who can move neither hand nor foot—rise from his mat—for that bed was a mat—roll it up, and walk home.

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So that our Saviour, by giving that man power to rise from the ground where he lay, and to walk, showed that He was God, and that, as God, He had, and always has, power to forgive sins.

You know old Susan Blake, in the cottage on the hill, don't you? She is "sick of the palsy." She can't move her left leg and left arm, and is quite helpless. She has to be carried from her chair to her bed; and some of you even go and do for her, because she can't help herself.

Suppose you saw her one day get up from her chair, and walk out as well as you, by herself; what would you think? Would you go and shake hands with her?

— No. Be frightened, and run away.

— Think she was a witch.

Of course you wouldn't know what to make of it; nor would anyone else.

And if she followed you at a good pace down the hill into the village, what would people think of it?

— Be frightened too, I suppose.

— And shut their doors, for fear she'd come in.

— And some would run and shout after her.

Of course they would be half afraid, as you say, and wonder much, and not know what might happen next; because they didn't know how it was she could walk.

So you can think how the people wondered when they saw the man sick of the palsy, who was let down through a hole in the roof, rise from his

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mat, roll it up, and walk out. People made room for him to pass, I can tell you.

But then, they were not frightened, exactly; because they heard the Saviour say, "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk." Only they wondered at the word of a man, as they thought, that could make a poor, sick, helpless man get well at once, stand up, and walk away.

They knew, however, it was God's doing, and that no one else could have done it. So "they marvelled and glorified God, who had given such power unto men" (*S. Matt.* ix. 8).

Now, children, what does this miracle of our Saviour's teach us?

It teaches us, first—that our Saviour always deals with us according to our faith in Him. If we don't care about Him, don't think of Him, don't love Him, and don't come to Him in our hearts to heal us of some plague or other—that is of some sin and wickedness there—He leaves us to ourselves, because we too, leave Him alone.

Would the sick man have been healed if, after he heard of the Saviour healing the diseases of other people, he had stayed at home?—Would hearing of it only have cured him?

— No; he must come to where the Saviour was.

Well, but if the four men—perhaps his sons—who carried him, had gone back home when they found they couldn't get in at the door, would he have been cured then?

— No.

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Of course not. But they were not to be put off like that. He and they, were so sure the Saviour could and would cure him, that when they found they could not get in at the door, they carried the man up on the roof; made a large hole through it, and let down the sick man in front of the Saviour.

When He thus saw that their faith in Him was so firm that they rested not, but toiled much, and got through every difficulty, until they reached Him, He rewarded them at once. They sought Him, and found Him; and He gave them more than they wanted; for the poor man only thought of being cured of his plague; but the merciful Saviour forgave him his sins also.

Now, what could that man do after our Saviour had healed him, that he could not do before?

— He could walk and move about.

Just so. This miracle, therefore, teaches us, secondly—that a man who couldn't move a limb in the way of God's commandments, so long as he lived away from the Saviour and didn't care about Him,—when that man comes to Him, and God's grace or Holy Spirit, gets into his heart, he then arises, and walks in the way of God's commandments.

But, what is "to walk in the way of God's commandments?"

— To go to church?

Not altogether.

— To keep them?

Yes; but to keep them readily and willingly—that is, to like to do it.

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A lame man can't walk well or quickly; and a paralytic can't walk at all.

And so it is as regards God's commandments. We must first love Him in order to keep His commandments as they should be kept—truly, in the heart. "If ye love Me," says the Saviour, "keep my commandments" (*S. John*, xiv. 15, 23). Because we do quickly and readily what we like to do; but if we don't like it, it is harder to do, and we don't do it so well.

Now you all know Sam Tipples at the Warren. He is very different now from what he used to be. Some time back he never was sober, but was a disgrace to the parish and to himself. In his clear moments, when warned by me and others, he said he would take the pledge and give up drink. He took it two or three times, and broke it as many.

You see, he wished a little to do right, but he could not do so long; because he only looked to the pledge, and not to the grace of God, to keep him straight. So whenever temptation came, he fell flat into it; took to drinking again, and then, by-and-by, was ashamed of having broken the pledge for the second or third time, and of thus "making a fool of himself."

One day, however, he was brought to his senses by the death of his poor little Nelly you all knew. He had starved her to disease, and then to death, through his drink.

When dying, she embraced him for the last time, and she said to him: "Father, do give up drinking.

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It is your fault I am so ill; but I forgive you for the Saviour's sake. Do give it up."

Great big tears ran down his cheeks, and he said nothing. But he was stung in his heart by the last words of his dying child. That is how God made a way for His grace into that man's heart. He then hearkened to advice and followed it. He read his Bible that had lain years and years in a dusty corner of his cottage, all covered with cobwebs. He has kept his church regularly ever since, and he is altogether an altered man.

Before that he was like a poor man sick of the palsy, who couldn't move a limb in the right way; or, if he tried, he stumbled and fell. But since he heard the Saviour's voice in his heart, he takes pleasure in keeping aloof from bad company; he is sober, temperate, and orderly; and now steadily walks in the way of God's commandments, to the best of his knowledge.

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VIII.

HEALING THE INFIRM MAN AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

S. John, v. 1-17.

HERE, children, we read of the healing of another poor man who also lay on a mat on the ground. Now, we don't know how long the other man had been sick of the palsy; perhaps he had a stroke of it only a year or two before the Saviour healed him.

But this one had lain thus eight-and-thirty years; that is, three times as long as many of you have been in the world, and more than twice as long as the others have.

There he lay, together with great many sick folk, on the stone floor of one of the porches—or covered ways—around the pool of Bethesda.

"Bethesda," in our Saviour's tongue, means "House," or "Place of Mercy;" because all those sick and crippled folk were allowed to lie there, as they are at the hospital, "free gratis," as people say.

Only, at the hospital they have doctors, who visit them often, and do what they can for them. But those poor sick people lying around the pool

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had to wait, they knew not how long, until an angel came at odd times, and troubled the water of the pool, and the man who first went into the water after it had thus been troubled by the angel, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

But this poor man couldn't move; and as no one cared about him, he neither got to the water, nor was carried into it. And so he waited time after time, lying on the stone floor eight-and-thirty long years, hoping some kind man would pity him, and help him to go down into the pool at the right time.

No one, however, had pity on him to help him until the Saviour came, who saw him lying there. He knew all about him, of course, and how long he had been ill; yet He said to him: "Wilt thou be made whole?"

Why? was it likely, children, the poor man would answer, "No, I won't?"

— No; it wasn't.

Of course not. And the Saviour knew beforehand what his answer would be. But, by asking him that question, our Saviour wished to make him think how long he had been lying there, how often he had seen the water troubled, and some one else step into it before him; and, therefore, how little he could hope to get well, since he had waited so long to no purpose.

Then, of course, he would feel all the more astonished and grateful when the Saviour said to him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."

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"And immediately," as we read, "the man was made whole, and took up his bed"—that was also a mat—"and walked; and the same day was the Sabbath" (v. 8, 9).

That was quickly done, children, was it not? And how the other sick folk must have envied him, who had lain there so long, when they saw him rise from the floor, take up his bed, and walk off!

But that day was the Sabbath. What day was that?

— The seventh day which God had hallowed, and had told the Jews to do no work on it.

Right. So they found fault with the man for carrying his bed on that day. But was he wrong?

— No; the Saviour told him to carry it.

Not only that; but, as you know, children, those Jews and Pharisees, had made many rules and commandments of their own, more than were in the law God gave to Moses—to enable them to keep that law outwardly, and leave the heart, where it ought to be kept—as bad and as wicked as ever.

That is why the Saviour called them "hypocrites," because they pretended to be so good, in the eyes of men, but within, were perhaps worse than those with whom they found fault.

Thus, turn over to *S. Luke*, ch. xiii. v. 11, and following, where you see that our Saviour healed a poor sick woman also on the Sabbath day. Then the ruler of the synagogue, a Pharisee, told the people to come and be healed on week days, and

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not on the Sabbath—as if to be healed on that day, was work.

But the Saviour said to him: "Hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?

"And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?

"And when he had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed;" because they felt he was right; they had not a word to say.

Then the Jews asked this man, who had told him to carry his bed on the Sabbath day. But he couldn't tell, as the Saviour went out of the crowd that was at that time about the pool of Bethesda.

Afterwards, He met the man in the temple, whither he had gone, no doubt, to return thanks to God for his cure; and the Saviour said to him: "Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing happen to thee."

Then that man went and "told the Jews it was Jesus which had made him whole." And the Jews persecuted the Saviour, and sought to slay Him; because He had healed this man on the Sabbath day, and said God was His Father. Was He wrong either way?

— No, right. He is the Son of God.

— And God as well as man, and our Saviour.

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And about the Sabbath, can you remember another time when He said "The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath"—meaning Himself?

— One Sabbath day, when He and His disciples went through the corn-fields, and they plucked ears of corn, because they were hungry?

That was the time. The Saviour then told the Pharisees they were wrong to find fault with the disciples for plucking ears of corn to eat, for that they must eat on Sabbath days also.

But now, what do we learn more particularly by this miracle?

Several things. First, as we saw with the man sick of the palsy—the Saviour was ready and able to cure all diseases of the body as well as of the soul. He healed the paralytic as a reward for his faith; but not so this man at Bethesda, for he didn't know who the Saviour was.

Why, then, did He heal the man thus, of His own free will?

Because, secondly, He wished to show that He is above the angels, "who are only ministering spirits sent forth" by Him who is Lord over them; to do His will, and not their own. So He sent an angel every now-and-then into the pool, to cure some one; but when He came Himself, He cured the infirm man, without the help of the angel.

And thirdly, we learn that He is "Lord also of the Sabbath." What does this mean?

It means that He who at first hallowed that day

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can make what rules He likes for keeping it. But also, that He was about to hallow another "Day of Rest," namely, His own day, "The Lord's Day," the day on which He rose from the dead—Sunday.

But as it is His day, it does not belong to us, to do our own work in it. He gives us six days for that, and tells us to keep holy His own day, by resting from our daily work; by worshipping in His house; and by doing on that day everything for His sake and not our own.

But lastly, children, mind what the Saviour said to the man He cured: "Behold, thou art whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing happen to thee." What does this mean?

It means that, now that the Saviour had shown him the great kindness of curing him, he was to spend the rest of his life in the fear and love of God, and in doing all the good he could to others.

Some of you, children, are sometimes ill; why, Harry Little is very ill at this moment. Why are these illnesses sent us, do you think?

— Please, sir, he'd eaten too much cake at the feast.

Very well; that illness is sent him to teach him not to be greedy and eat more than he ought. It is a warning to him to leave off his bad habit, and be sober, and to stop when he has had enough.

And why is that other boy laid up in bed?

— Because he broke his leg.

How?

— He fell from an apple-tree.

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What was he doing there?

— Picking apples.

His own?

— No, Farmer Brimble's.

And had the farmer given him leave to go into his orchard, and help himself to his apples?

— No.

Well, then, he got what he went to fetch. He went to steal apples, and he hobbled back home with a broken leg. I dare say he'll learn this lesson, since he forgot what he had learnt at school. What was it?

— "Thou shalt not steal."

And I dare say he'll know better another day, and give up stealing apples, or anything else. For he is in great pain; and the doctor says he may have to cut off the leg, that is badly broken.

Bear in mind, children, that our Heavenly Father would never send us troubles, if we did not bring them upon ourselves, by our own fault. So they are both chastisements and warnings—chastisements for what we have done wrong, and warnings not to do so again; but to do better in time to come.

And when in His mercy He raises us from a bed of sickness, or brings us, in His own way, out of some great trouble, it is as if He said to us: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

The very words I repeated to butcher Ball after the accident of which he nearly died. You re-

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member what a desperate man he was, hating, swearing, cursing, all day long; and how, coming back from a sale, he was upset in his gig, and picked up insensible.

While he was recovering, he was much softened. He begged pardon of those he had offended; said he repented of all his wickedness, and would be bad no more, if only it pleased God to bring him round.

God in His mercy gave him more time; and I repeated to him the words of our Saviour to the infirm man, telling him to beware lest if he went on as he did before, a worse thing might happen to him.

No sooner was he well again, however, than he was as bad as before, if not worse.

Until one day, you remember, he dropped dead in his own house. He sinned again, and a worse thing came to him.

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IX.

HEALING THE MAN WITH A WITHERED HAND.

S. Matt. xii. 10-14.

IT was about the beginning of April, in the second year of our Saviour's ministry on earth, when He happened to be walking through a cornfield on the Sabbath day with His disciples.

The barley-harvest was over, and the wheat-harvest was beginning; and as the disciples were hungry, they plucked ears of corn, and rubbed them in their hands, blew off the chaff, and ate the corn. As people do all over that country, when going about in the time of harvest; and as you have seen farmers do when they wish to see, or to show you, if their corn is well "kerned"—that is, has a good kernel.

Then the Pharisees were angry with the disciples for so doing on the Sabbath day. But our Saviour showed them, that if they had studied the law as well, as they wished the common people to think they did, they would know that the disciples had not broken the Sabbath, and were not to blame.

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For that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (*St. Mark*, ii. 27). What does this mean, think ye?

What was the Sabbath?

— It was the seventh day, when God rested from all His works, and hallowed it.

Was it before He made man, or after?

— After.

And what else did God make for man?

— Herb and plants to grow for food.

For his own use; so was also the Sabbath day, the use of which was to rest from all daily work, and to do on that day that only, without which we and others cannot live.

And our Saviour then showed the Pharisees, as He did again afterwards, that they themselves did more on the Sabbath day, than to pluck ears of corn and to eat them.

For on the next Sabbath after that, He went, as He was wont, to the synagogue—that is, to the parish church of the village or town in which He happened to be; and He went to it on Sabbath days with all sorts of people, you know, even with men possessed with devils.

He didn't think they were too bad for Him, nor He too good for them, as some people think of themselves; who build chapels and meeting-houses, because the parish church is not good enough for them. You see, children, our Saviour was not so proud or conceited as they.

And you remember that once He cast out the

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spirit of an unclean devil in the synagogue at Capernaum. But this time it was a man with a withered hand. His hand, and perhaps the whole arm, was shrunk and withered, and quite useless. He could neither move nor use it in any way, and no doctor could cure him.

The Pharisees that were there, wishing to find all the fault they could with our Lord, asked Him if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath days.

What should you say it was, children?

— Right, because it was doing good.

And so thought the Saviour. Yet He did not answer them straight—"Yes, it is lawful;"—but He made them answer their own question themselves.

He asked them what they did when one of their sheep fell into a pit on a Sabbath day; whether they left it there to perish, or lifted it out? But they didn't answer, because they knew they lifted it out.

So the Saviour said to them: You won't leave one of your sheep to perish on the Sabbath, neither will I one of my own. Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day, say ye? I will show you it is.

Then, looking in anger at them for their being such hypocrites, He said to the man with the withered hand: "Stretch forth thine hand." Although he never could do it before, he did so at once, at the Saviour's word, and his hand was restored whole like the other.

But why did the Saviour tell him to stretch forth his hand? He might have healed him with-

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out saying anything, or by touching it. Why did He?

— To make him do it?

— For the people to see?

That's better. Yes, that the people in the synagogue might see the miracle wrought by the Saviour's word.

But the Pharisees were very angry, and held a council against Him how they might destroy Him; not so much because He had healed a man on the Sabbath day, as because He had shown them up before the people, and proved to them that they were hypocrites.

You know the meaning of the word hypocrite. I explained to you that it means "a man that wears a mask;" who, therefore, looks different from what he is, and who looks with his own eyes, through the holes in the mask, differently from what people think he does, when they look at his mask.

A hypocrite, then, is a man who pretends to be better than he is—nobody pretends to look worse—and who thus tries to deceive others. But he can't deceive God, whose eyes see through the mask into the heart. Now, no man likes to be found out—least of all a hypocrite.

But when our Saviour heard the Pharisees were plotting against Him, He went elsewhere. Then many people followed Him, and He healed all the sick among them, because He had pity on them; according to the words of the prophet: "A bruised

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reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench" (*Is.* xlii. 1); "and in His name shall the Gentiles trust,"—as you and I do, children, thank God.

But, then, what is the meaning of this miracle as regards ourselves? What is the use of hands?

— To work with.

— To take anything.

But what can poor Ellen Gales do with her right hand and arm that hang by her side, dead-like? Both her hand and arm are withered; you see the bones, and can count the sinews, for there is but little flesh on them.

— She can do nothing with them.

Of course she can't. You see, they hang on to her body, but she can't use them.

Well, what is it wherewith we "take in," or seize, apprehend, or understand things?

— Our sense?

Well, our reason, or mind, or understanding. But what does Scripture say? Read 1 *Cor.* ii. 14.

"But the natural man"—that is, our own understanding before God's grace has touched it—"receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God"—can't understand, seize, or take in, anything at all about God and heaven;—"for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned,"—that is, understood.

So you see, children, our reason, our wits, and understanding are, so to speak, withered and useless to us as regards God and the things that be-

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long to His Kingdom, until the Saviour has quickened them by the grace of His Holy Spirit.

Then we can use them, and "take in" things about God and heaven; as that man could use his hand when the Saviour had made it whole.

And then, we like to think of heaven, where we hope to be when we die, with God and His angels around His throne. We like to think of meeting the Saviour there, and being with Him; and we prepare ourselves for it.

So that, when we die, He may receive and welcome us into His heavenly kingdom.

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X.

HEALING THE CENTURION'S SERVANT.

S. Luke, vii. 1-11.

ONE day, about the same time, our Saviour was coming into Capernaum, when a centurion, whose servant was lying at home sick of the palsy, "sent unto Him the elders of the Jews, beseeching Him that He would come and heal his servant."

But what was "a centurion," children?

— A sentry?

No; but a soldier. A centurion was the captain of a hundred soldiers; and, as that country then belonged to the Emperor of Rome, this centurion probably was a Roman, and, therefore, also a Gentile. For you know that all people that were not Jews were by them called "Gentiles," or people of other nations. And you also know that the Jews would have nothing to do with them.

This centurion, however, was a Gentile who, as the prophet said, "trusted in the Saviour's name." Not only that, but he did not, like other Romans, hate, despise, and ill-treat the Jews; but he was kind to them, because they were God's people; and he built them a synagogue.

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But why did he send the elders—that is, old and respectable men—of the Jews to the Saviour, and did not come himself?

— Because he was shy?

— No, Emma; he was a soldier, he wouldn't be shy.

Well, but sister wasn't so far wrong, my boy. Tell me why, then, if you know better.

— Was it because they were Jews and he wasn't?

You are very near the mark, and so is Emma too. The centurion, being a Gentile, thought less of himself than of the Jews, because he knew that "Israel was God's first-born" (*Exod.* iv. 22, 23)—that is, that God first made Himself known to the Jews, and that all other nations should be blessed through them, and after them.

But why "through them?" Because the Saviour of the world was a son of Abraham, to whom God's promise was made, that "in him all nations of the earth should be blessed" (*Gen.* xviii. 18, xxii. 18; *Gal.* iii. 8, 9, 16, 29). Therefore did the centurion send some of the most respectable of our Saviour's countrymen to Him, not only out of respect for Him, but also because he thought the Saviour would rather hearken to them than to him, a Gentile.

So they came to Him, and entreated Him to come and heal the servant. The centurion, they said, is a good man, "for he loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue."

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And the Saviour went at once.

But as He was coming, the centurion sent to Him some friends of his, begging Him not to take the trouble to come, but only to speak the word, and the servant would be healed.

For, said the centurion through his friends, I am not worthy Thou shouldest come under my roof. I, who am but a small officer in the army, command my men, and they obey me; but Thou art Lord of all, and the Saviour of the world. Only speak the word, and disease or sickness will obey Thee, and depart at once.

When the Saviour heard that, He turned round and said to those who were with Him: "I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

"And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick." He was cured by the Saviour's will only; like the nobleman's son, also at Capernaum.

Can any one of you, children, remember another centurion, also a Gentile, that feared God?

— Cornelius, of the Italian band, who saw an angel that told him to send for Peter, to teach and baptize him.

Very good. But who told Peter to go?

— The servants Cornelius sent to fetch him.

I don't mean them. Cornelius was at Cæsarea, and Peter was at Joppa, a day's journey on foot. The next day, when the servants were getting near to Joppa, do you remember what happened to Peter?

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— He was hungry, and saw a vision of all sorts of beasts, and a voice said, "Kill and eat."

And what did Peter say?

— Not so Lord, for I never ate any unclean thing. But God said to him: Call not unclean what I have made clean.

And while Peter thought on this, Cornelius's servants came, knocked at the door, and God told him to go with them; and Peter went. But I don't think he would have gone if God had not sent him; because Peter liked the Jews best, and preached to them; but S. Paul preached to the Gentiles.

These centurions, children, thus sent for the Saviour and for His apostles, in fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah, who, speaking of the Saviour, said: "The Gentiles shall come to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising" (*Is.* lx. 2, 3). For some say, the wise men from the East, who came to worship the Saviour at His birth, were kings.

But, now, children, what do we learn from this miracle of the Saviour?

— That He went directly He was asked, because He was kind.

That is one thing, but I don't mean that quite; because we have seen Him do the same in other miracles, as in that of the poor leper; when He said at once: "I will; be thou clean."

But what does that centurion teach us, besides his faith in the Saviour? How did he behave?

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— Very respectful.

Very respectfully, you mean.

Yes; and that is what I wish you to notice.

Our Saviour's own countrymen at Capernaum did not believe in Him. "He came unto His own," says S. John (ch. i. 11), "but His own received Him not;" but Gentiles living among them received Him gladly—that is, had faith in Him as in Christ, the Saviour of the world.

But do you know why?

I'll tell you. But, first of all—do you get your breakfast every morning?

— Yes.

What?

— Bread and milk.

— And butter, sometimes.

And mother gets it ready for you, before you come to school. And if there isn't enough, mother goes without her own, rather than let you want it.

So then, you look for your bread and milk every morning; and as you are used to it, you don't think so much of it, as a poor beggar would, who never had a breakfast, and only munched a dry crust without milk.

And if that poor beggar came to your door, while you were having breakfast, Ellen, and you gave him some of your bread and milk, because you had enough and he hadn't any, but was very hungry, would he be glad or sorry?

— Glad.

— And thank her very much.

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Yes; and think her very happy to have—

— So much bread and milk every morning for breakfast.

Just so. That poor beggar would think a great deal more of a drop of milk, and bread in it, than Ellen Stiles; because she has it always, and he never.

So then, children, you see—don't you?—that we do not value what we have, so much as what we want or wish to have. You have good clothes on, and don't think of it. But other children in rags, and shivering, would be thankful enough to have clothes, not even so good as those you have on.

Now you will be able to understand how it was, that our Saviour's own countrymen didn't believe in Him, but hated and persecuted Him; while Gentiles believed in Him, and came to Him humbly and respectfully.

His countrymen were children of Abraham, God's friend, to whom God had promised many great blessings; and they called God their Father.

But the poor Gentiles were all heathens; they had so many gods, that they didn't know which to pray to; and they had no hope of better things.

But the Jews knew God had chosen them first of all other nations, and that the Messiah, or Christ, the Saviour of the world, should be one of them; and be King of kings—although His kingdom is not of this world, but of heaven.

So, when He came, born in a stable, and laid in

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a manger, and, as they thought, the son of a carpenter, they wouldn't believe He was the Messiah, Christ; because they expected the Messiah would be a great king of this world, fight their enemies, and make them a great nation. So they received Him not, but reviled Him, and at last, put Him to death.

But some of the Gentiles who lived among the Jews, or near their country, and who read in the Law, that God had promised to Abraham that the Saviour should be the Saviour of all nations—of Gentiles as well as of Jews—believed that, and came to Him; and were most thankful to find a Saviour, who healed, forgave, saved them, and gave them everlasting life. And this centurion was one of them.

You see now, children, that the Jews were fed to the full with God's promises, and didn't care for more. But the Gentiles, like poor beggars, were thankful for a drop of milk and a bit of bread, from the Jew's table.

That centurion, then, was so thankful to be allowed to hope the Saviour would notice him, that he humbled himself, saying he was not worthy the Saviour should come under his roof. If He would only say one word, that would be enough.

So, because he humbled himself and was so respectful, the Saviour granted him his prayer at once; "For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (1 *Pet.* v. 6, 7).

You remember the parable of the Pharisee and

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the Publican. Which of the two went home forgiven?

— The Publican.

Why?

— Because he said: "God be merciful to me a sinner," and wouldn't look up to heaven.

And why not the Pharisee?

— Because he was proud, and thanked God he was not as other men are.

So, also, you see, at Capernaum. The Saviour's countrymen thought themselves better than "the carpenter's son," the Saviour. But the poor Gentile would not so much as look up to Him; but smote upon his breast and said in his heart: Jesus, Saviour, have pity on me, a sinner of the Gentiles. And the Saviour heard him.

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XI.

RAISING THE WIDOW'S SON AT NAIN.

S. Luke, vii. 11-18.

A WEEK or two after the Saviour had healed the centurion's servant at Capernaum, as He was going about healing the sick and doing all the good He could, He came to a small town called Nain.

It lies on the slope of a hill called "Little Hermon," only two or three miles from Endor, where the witch lived in the days of Saul; and it was also near to Shunem, where the rich lady lived who fed the prophet Elisha when he passed that way (2 *Kings*, iv. 8).

This town of Nain is now in ruins; but from it there is a beautiful view of Nazareth on the hill, on the other side of the valley; and of Mount Tabor on the right of it. When I was there in May, about the same time of the year as our Saviour also went there, the weather was beautiful; the corn was carried in and being thrashed, and the hill meadows were still covered with lovely spring flowers.

As our Saviour was coming to the town, we read that a dead man was being carried out to the

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burying-ground. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow. So that, as her husband was dead, she had now no one to support her; but she was quite alone in the world, and helpless.

No wonder, then, if the poor woman wept sore. She was broken-hearted, for she had lost her last stay, when she lost her son.

But when the Saviour, who knew all about it, "saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not."

He was touched with her grief; and although He was a stranger to her, His sweet voice and kind, loving manner must have soothed her at once.

And she had not long to wait, ere she saw why she was not to weep.

For He came and touched the bier. Then the men who carried it, stood still; and He said, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." And the dead man stood up; and began to speak. And the Saviour gave him back to his mother.

No wonder, children, that, as we read, "fear came on all." They had heard, no doubt, of our Saviour cleansing the leper, casting out devils, healing the man sick of the palsy, and of other cures; but never of a dead man coming to life, because he had not yet raised any.

We too, children, should feel amazed, and also frightened, I trow, if we saw a dead man rise from his coffin.

— I'd run away and scream.

— I too.

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And so would also many, many older people than you. The people of Nain, however, although they were much astonished and frightened, yet they did the right thing, in saying that it was God's power that did it; that "He had visited His people;" and that a great prophet was risen up among them.

And that was true, for the Saviour is our "Prophet, Priest and King"—as I shall explain to you another day.

But, of course, as you may think, children, the news that a dead man had been raised to life by "Jesus of Nazareth"—as they called the Saviour—soon spread all over the country; and people came to Him from all parts, not only to be healed of their diseases, but also to see the great Prophet who had raised the widow's son to life.

But why did they call Him a great prophet? Can you remember another son that was dead, also raised to life, not far from Nain? What places, did I tell you, were near to it?

— Endor and Shunem.

And what about Shunem?

— A rich lady lived there, who did for Elisha when he passed that way.

Well, and you will see in the fourth chapter of the Second Book of Kings, that the son of that lady died of a sun-stroke. Then she went to Elisha, who was on Mount Carmel, some ten or twelve miles from Shunem, across the plain; and told him her son was dead.

Then he went back with her, and went into the

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room where the child was laid on the bed, and he shut the door. Then he "lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm." Then he returned, walked to and fro in the house, stretched himself again upon him, and the child sneezed and opened his eyes. Then Elisha called the child's mother, and said to her, "Take up thy son."

This, too, was a miracle, children, that happened nearly 900 years before,—a long time, was it not?

But, of course, the people of Nain and of Shunem had heard of it, because they heard it read in the synagogue on Sabbath days. And the Shunem folk liked to think that the prophet Elisha used to come to their village, and that he had wrought that miracle there. So you may be sure that many a poor mother at Shunem, or at Nain, who lost a child, often wished Elisha was still there, to raise her son or her daughter, to life.

But were both those miracles alike—the raising of the Shunammite's son, and of that of the widow of Nain?

— Hers was quickest.

You are right. Both miracles were wrought by the power of God; but the raising of the Shunammite's child was wrought by that power lent to a man, Elisha; whereas the raising of the widow's son was by God Himself.

So the prophet took time: he prayed, and

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stretched himself over the child, and walked to and fro in the house ere the child came to life. But the Saviour only touched the bier and said to the dead: "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." And he arose at once.

What, then, made that great difference?

Listen. Although we believe in the Resurrection of the dead, because it is of the Christian faith to do so, yet it was not taught so plainly to the Jews.

"Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him" up to heaven, without his dying.

God also took up Moses; for his sepulchre never was found; but we know he is in heaven, for he was seen with Elijah in company with the Saviour, on the Holy Mount.

Elijah also was taken up to heaven without dying, and he also raised to life the son of the widow of Zarephath (1 *Kings*, xvii. 17).

Then Elisha did the same at Shunem, and when he was dead, he still raised to life a dead man who was cast into his sepulchre, and who rose again as soon as he touched Elisha's bones (2 *Kings*, xiii. 21).

All that was intended to teach the Jews that the dead would rise again. But only very few of them, prophets and others to whom God taught it, understood what it meant. Because "life and immortality," that is, rising again from the dead and living for ever, as we shall do, "were brought to light"—made quite plain—only "by the Gospel"—by the

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Saviour and by His Word (2 *Tim.* i. 10); when He raised the widow's son, the daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus; and when Himself rose again on the third day, because He is "the Resurrection and the Life" (*S. John*, xi. 25), that is—He is stronger than death, and has overcome it.

Therefore did He say to Martha: "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;" because death is only a long sleep; "and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," but live for ever (*S. John*, xi. 25, 26).

Our bodies, children, must die and be turned into dust, whence they were taken, because of the sin that is in us; but our souls can never die: they are a breath of life from the Almighty—from God the Father of spirits; they must live for ever.

I shall tell you more about this another time. But what else does this miracle teach us, besides raising the dead to life?

What did the kind Saviour say to the poor mother?

— "Weep not."

Why?

— Because He was sorry for her?

Yes, because "He had compassion on her." What is "compassion," children?

— Feeling sorry?

Something more. "Compassion" means "sympathy." Do you understand this any better?

— No.

I should think not. And I only asked the

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question, because it is one of those hard words found in your school-books, that were written, one would think, by men who never taught children, and don't know how to talk plain English to them.

"Sympathy" is a Greek word, which, like "compassion," means "fellow-suffering," or "suffering with" another. You are not yet come to Greek, children, but there is no knowing. As things go, you may be made to learn it ere long.

Well, our Saviour "had compassion" on the poor mother—that is to say, He suffered with her. Now, can one suffer with another?

Ellen, when you ran your needle into your finger the other day, and sister said kindly: "Don't cry, Nelly; let me suck it, and tie a bit of rag round it"—did she feel the prick on her finger, the same as you did on your own?

— No; it only pricked me; only she was kind.

Exactly. She felt sorry for you, although she could not feel with you the same pain you felt, because the needle only pricked your finger, but didn't prick hers. So she only guessed how much it hurt you, but couldn't tell for certain, because she was not hurt in the same way.

So you see, children, that no one can take upon himself the pain which another feels, and so "suffer with" him. He can feel sorry for him, and pity him; but he can't share his suffering, because it does not touch him in the same way.

There is only One who "suffers with" us, and

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who, therefore, can have real compassion on us, namely, our Saviour. Because He makes Himself one with us, so that He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities—with our pain, our troubles, and our sorrows. They touch Him and make Him feel the same pain as we do. So that as He feels with us, He also feels for us.

He had compassion on the poor widow—that is to say, He not only was sorry for her, like her other friends—but He felt her grief just as she did, and shared it with her.

So truly "did He bear our griefs, and carry our sorrows" (*Is.* liii. 4).

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XII.

THE STILLING OF THE TEMPEST.

S. Luke, viii. 22-26.

WHEN our Saviour had ended His parables of the sower, of the grain of mustard-seed, and others, which He taught the people on the beach, from the boat in which He sat, He told His disciples He wished to go to the other side of the lake. And they launched forth.

What did He go there for, think ye, children?

— To see the country?

Our Saviour wouldn't go for that, because He knew all countries.

— To see people there?

Yes; some people with whom others would have nothing to do; in order to see what He could do for them. Because, as He came to preach the Gospel, and to do the work His Father had set Him to do, He never was weary of it, but worked at it night and day; yet, although He never was weary in His mind, His body, like ours, felt sometimes tired and wanted rest, as we do.

Thus you remember how, "being wearied with His journey" on foot, He rested about noon, and

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"sat thus on the well," where the Samaritan woman came to draw water.

So also, now, while crossing over in the boat from the beautiful plain of Genezareth to the wild country of the Gadarenes, He fell asleep on a pillow, from fatigue of body.

Meanwhile, there came down a storm of wind on the lake, so that the boat filled with water, and they were in jeopardy, that is—in danger.

Those storms are very common on that lake after sunset, especially in summer; but also in the winter, and this was in November. The wind rushes down the hills at the back of the plain of Genezareth, and sweeps over the plain, on to the lake, which is wide, and on which the waves rise to a great height.

This happened during the night, and as the boat was small—only a fishing-boat—it was tossed about; the waves brake into it, and the disciples, though hardy fishermen, thought themselves in danger.

But the Saviour slept. He had nothing to fear, neither had the disciples, so long as they were with Him.

But they didn't think so, because they did not yet quite believe in Him. They were "slow of heart" to understand the Scriptures, and to understand Him (*S. Luke*, xxiv. 25).

So they came to Him, and woke Him up, saying: "Master, master, we perish!" because they were afraid.

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Now would you, children, have been afraid of the storm while you were with the Saviour in the boat?

— A little.

Why "a little?"

— Because—

— No, I shouldn't.

One says "a little," another says "he shouldn't" —very much like the disciples.

We don't know that they all were afraid, because some of them believed in the Saviour more than others. Perhaps John, the beloved disciple, and Peter, were not afraid. But those who woke up the Saviour, would not have wakened Him up, if they didn't think they were in danger, and that He could do something for them.

Had they believed in Him fully, they would have said to themselves: "He, the Son of God, by whom the sea and all things were made, couldn't be drowned; neither can we, so long as we are with Him." And they would have allowed Him to sleep and take His rest.

But He knew all about it; and very likely He allowed the storm to rise, and to lift up the waves of the lake, in order to work a miracle, and to teach His disciples through it.

He stood up, "and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water; and they ceased, and there was a calm."

But He also said to His disciples—as well He might: "Where is your faith?"—how could you

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feel afraid, or be in danger with Me? you see I command the wind and the waves, and they obey Me?

Then, of course, the disciples were, some, ashamed of themselves, but, all of them, very much amazed; and they said: "What manner of man is this! for He commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey Him."

You see they still called Him "a man;" and it was some six or eight months later that, when He asked His disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (*S. Matt.* xvi. 15, 16).

Now what does this miracle teach us? It was intended as a lesson to the disciples, and as a comfort to us.

As a lesson to the disciples—in this way.

Noah's Ark, floating on the waters of the Flood, that saved Noah and his family, was a figure of the Church, sailing, so to speak, on the waters of this world, and saving all those that take refuge in it.

It is, therefore, compared to a ship, whose captain is Christ, whose steersman is the Holy Ghost, whose owner is God the Father, and whose sailors are the apostles. So they call the middle part of a church "the nave," that means "a ship."

Now the Saviour had commanded His disciples to put to sea from their own beautiful home, and to cross over to the other side; to a wild country inhabited by swine and devils. And while crossing, a storm came down upon the sea, tossed them about,

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and would have drowned them, but for the Saviour stilling the tempest.

Well, that represented the apostles leaving their country, when the Saviour sent them to preach the Gospel in all nations (*S. Matt.* xxviii. 19, 20), and thus to begin the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, to which we belong.

It is called "the Church," that means the Lord's house, household, or family. It is "holy" because it is His. It is "Catholic," that means of the whole world, and not of one place only; and it is "Apostolic," because it was begun by the apostles, when they went about preaching the Gospel everywhere.

Now, the Saviour told His apostles that "in the world they should have tribulation"—that is, trouble and affliction; "But be of good cheer," said He also, "I have overcome the world" (*S. John*, xvi. 33).

He also warned them that they "should be hated of all men for His sake" (*S. Matt.* xxiv. 9), and that the time would come, when those who put them to death, would think they were doing God service (*S. John*, xvi. 2).

But He also said to them: "Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (*S. Luke*, xii. 32). "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (*S. Matt.* xxviii. 20).

So then, children, you see, the boat with the Saviour and His apostles, was a figure of the Church, which they went forth to begin, or plant,

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by preaching the Gospel, in the world. The storm of wind and waves that tossed the boat, were the persecutions the apostles and martyrs were to suffer; and the troubles His Church has had, and still has, to encounter in this world. But then, He is in the ship. His Church is safe; no storm can sink her, for when He thinks fit, He can arise, and say to the storm, "Peace, be still!"

And then, children, this miracle is also, as I said, a comfort to you, me, and all of us. Because "through much tribulation must we enter into the kingdom of God" (*Acts*, xiv. 23).

"Tribulation," you know, means thrashing the corn out of the ear, by bruising and mauling it. So also does our heavenly Father make us better, and fit for His kingdom in heaven, by trying us, by crossing our will, by chastening us and sending us troubles.

"Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous;" we don't like trouble, or sorrow, or pain, or sickness—do we children? "Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (*Heb.* xii. 11). We are made better, by being made to give up our own will, and to suffer patiently our Heavenly Father's will; just as wheat is made fit for food by thrashing.

And little people like you, have their little and their big troubles too; they come very early.

Well, then, this miracle teaches us, that if the Saviour be with us in our troubles—and He always

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is with us if we wish Him to be—when He sees we have had trouble enough, He says to trouble, to pain, and to sorrow, "Peace be still!" and there is a great calm.

And then, if we continue with Him in the ship, not only shall we be safe in the storm, but—after He has cast unclean spirits out of us—will He land us at peace in His own kingdom above.

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XIII.

THE GADARENES.

S. Mark, v. 1-21.

AFTER crossing the lake, our Saviour and His disciples landed safe at the country of the Gadarenes, over against Galilee—that is, on the opposite side.

The Gadarenes were the inhabitants of the country round about Gadara, a large town in those parts. Those Gadarenes were not Jews, but were from different countries: some were Romans, others Greeks; others again, came from Syria and the East; and were almost all heathens.

The Jews, you know, hated the Galileans as well as the Samaritans, because they were the children of the people the king of Assyria had sent thither to inhabit the country, when he took away captive the ten tribes (2 *Kings*, xv. 29; 1 *Chron.* v. 26); and those people had brought with them from their countries, the worship of their gods.

But the Gadarenes lived more out of the way than the Galileans. They inhabited what was called "the Galilee of the Gentiles;" and the Jews would have no more to do with those people, than with the swine they fed.

Thither went the Saviour, however, to visit the

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outcasts from His own nation, to see what good He could do them.

So we read that, after landing, as He was going inland, there met Him a man who had been possessed with devils a long time; who lived in tombs, and was so fierce, that no one would pass that way. For they had often bound him with chains and fetters; but when the devil set upon him, he brake asunder his chains, and was driven wild and furious into the wilderness.

But when he saw the Saviour, he cried out, "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God Most High? I beseech Thee torment me not"—very much in the same words as the spirit of an unclean devil the Saviour cast out in the synagogue at Capernaum.

For the Saviour said unto him, "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit."

And He asked him his name. "Legion," said the devil; "for we are many." Now, "a legion" properly meant a regiment of several thousand soldiers, with cavalry; but here it means "a great number." Satan's hosts are large enough for the whole world.

But there was, not far from them, a herd of swine feeding, and the devils asked leave to go into the swine. And forthwith the Saviour gave them leave. But no sooner had the devils entered into the swine, than the whole herd—some two thousand—ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and were drowned.

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It must have been down some of the cliffs on the shore of the lake, and that look white and high from the plain of Genezareth.

And the tombs in which the man dwelt, who was possessed with devils, are there yet. I went into one of them, in which shepherds lived. They are hewn in a kind of hard black rock, deep, and six or seven feet high, with heavy stone doors that turn on a pivot. Some of those doors have carvings on them.

And as you know, children, that the Jews were forbidden to eat swine's flesh, or pork, ham, or bacon of any kind, a herd of swine would never have been allowed in their country round about Jerusalem; not even, perhaps, in Galilee itself. But the Gadarenes lived on the other side of the lake, where not many people cared to go; so they fed these swine for themselves, and also, perhaps, for the Roman soldiers who lived among them, and who ate anything.

When the men who fed the swine saw the whole herd, all of a sudden, run as fast as they could, and rush over the cliff into the lake below, they ran away to the town, and told everybody about it.

Then the people came out to see what had happened. And they found the man of whom they were all afraid, sitting at the Saviour's feet, clothed, and in his right mind.

They did not, however, care so much for that, as for the loss of their herd of swine; and as they were afraid they might lose some more, if the Saviour remained longer among them, they asked

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Him to leave their country, and to go away. If they could behave thus, they were not much better than their own swine; and not so good as the man out of whom the Saviour had cast devils.

For he asked Him to let him be with Him; he was so thankful no longer to cut himself with stones, as he used to do, nor to behave like a maniac—like one mad with rage—but to be now in his right mind, that he begged the Saviour to be allowed to follow Him.

But the Saviour told him rather to go, and tell his friends and the people of the country round about, all that had happened to him, and how the Lord had had compassion on him.

So he went, and told it all; and people marvelled.

But our Saviour got into the boat with His disciples and crossed over to His own country, to Capernaum.

Now, let us see, children, what we learn from our Saviour's visit to the Gadarenes.

First of all, we see His kindness in going all the way across the lake—and in a storm, too—to cast the devils out of that poor man who was possessed with them.

It is something like His coming from Heaven —His own country—to visit us, poor lost sinners, whom "the devil had taken captive at his will" (2 *Tim.* ii. 26)—that is, made us his prisoners, to make us do all the sin and wickedness he likes.

Not only did the Saviour show Satan that He is stronger than he, when He was tempted of the

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devil, yet without sin—but, children, when you see a drunkard turn sober and clean, what is it, but the spirit of that unclean devil, being cast out of him by the Holy Ghost, whom the Saviour sends from Heaven?

Or when a child, who was disobedient, unruly, who wouldn't learn his lessons, becomes obedient, diligent, and clean—why, it is like an unclean spirit being cast out of him; and that, too, by the grace of God.

For, secondly, that is what happened to that poor Gadarene. When once unclean spirits had departed from him, he sat at the Saviour's feet, clothed, and in his right mind; and wished to follow Him wherever He went.

Then we see what became of the devils that were cast out of that man. They besought the Saviour to send them into the herd of swine.

Swine, or pigs as you call them, are very dirty beasts, you know. They feed on all manner of coarse and dirty food, and delight in wallowing—that is, lying down and rolling themselves—in mire and dirt.

The Jews, therefore, were forbidden to eat their flesh, because that meat was said to give the leprosy. Therefore, also, men possessed with unclean spirits of gluttony, drunkenness, and wickedness of all kinds, are compared to swine; because they revel—that is, delight—in filth. The devils, then, begged to go into the swine, as the fittest place for them.

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Yet no sooner did the devils get there, than the swine being possessed, ran down a cliff into the lake, and were drowned,—to show that when an unclean spirit gets into a man, it makes him rush from bad to worse. Nothing one can say will turn him; but that unclean spirit drives him, like Legion, into the wilderness.

It is what our Saviour says: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

"Then he saith: I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished."

That is to say—the drunkard who felt ashamed of himself, and took the pledge, was more decent and sober, for a bit.

"Then goeth the unclean spirit, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first" (*S. Matt.* xii. 43, 44, 45).

That is just what happened to that lime-burner, near the kiln on the hill. He was a regular drunkard, never sober; but was prevailed upon to try and take the pledge, and see if that would cure him.

Not a bit of it. As soon as he grew thirsty he drank again, took the pledge and broke it ever so many times; because the pledge will never keep a man from drink, without the grace of God.

So he went on drinking in spite of all good ad-

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vice, until one day, being so drunk that he could not stand, he fell into the kiln, was choked, and burnt to death. So says Scripture, children: "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (*Prov.* xxix. 1).

And, lastly, we see that the Gadarenes loved their swine more than the Saviour; and fearing lest they should lose more of them, they entreated Him to be gone. And He left them.

A warning to us, little people.

When a man, like that lime-burner, hears good advice and follows it for a bit, it is like the Saviour coming to cast out that unclean spirit of drunkenness—swearing, or what not.

But when the good advice and the soft voice of conscience within, have been drowned in more drink, or more wickedness, it is as if that man said to the Saviour: "I love my swine more than I love Thee. So leave me to my swine, and be gone!"

But who would say that with his own lips, children?

— Why, no one.

No one would dare say so; for he would be frightened at his own voice.

Yet he does it, and drives the Saviour from his heart, who, having learnt to do good, yet loves to do evil. "He does despite to the spirit of grace," to the grace of God in him; and God leaves him to himself and to his swine.

That was the last chance the Gadarenes had of

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seeing the Saviour. This may be the last chance this man may have of hearing God's voice saying to him in his heart: "Turn at My reproof and live."

Therefore "Take heed," children, "lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

"But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (*Heb.* iii. 12, 13).

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XIV.

THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS.

S. Mark, v. 21 *to the end.*

THE Saviour then left the Gadarenes, who would not have Him, and crossed back again to His own city, Capernaum.

No sooner had He landed, than one of the rulers of the synagogue—a great man of that place—met the Saviour, and entreated Him to come and heal his little daughter, who was on the point of death.

And our Saviour went, followed, as He always was, by a large crowd of people, who wished to see and hear Him, and to be cured of their diseases.

In this crowd there was a poor woman who had been ill a long time—twelve years—and who had spent all she had on doctors who couldn't cure her, but only made her worse. Then she said within herself: If I could but come at Him, and but touch His clothes, I know I should "be made whole"—that is, made quite well.

So she made her way through the crowd, because she would do it. And she never stopped until she was close enough to the Saviour, to reach out her hand, and just touch the hem of His garment. And as soon as she had touched it, she felt herself quite well.

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The Saviour then said: "Somebody hath touched Me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me" (*S. Luke*, viii. 46).

Then Peter said to Him: "The crowd throngs Thee"—that is, jostles Thee—"and sayest Thou, some one has touched Me?"

When the poor woman saw that, although she had touched the Saviour's garment so lightly that no one but He could have felt it, she came and told Him everything.

He then said to her: "Daughter"—that was a kind way of speaking to her—"Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole"—that is, cured—"of thy plague."

Now, I should like to know, children, how it was that our Saviour didn't feel the jostling of the crowd that pressed upon Him, and yet felt the light touch of that poor woman on His clothes?

— Because He knew everything?

That is not quite the right answer. He also knew all those who thronged Him, right and left; yet He took no notice of them, as He did of this poor woman.

— A virtue had gone out of Him.

That is a better answer. What do you think was that virtue?

— Healing power?

Yes: power to heal her of her plague.

But, then, how came that soft touch of the poor woman, to bring out a healing virtue from the Saviour, when none of those who thronged Him

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got any good from Him?—and no doubt some of them had also diseases, as well as she.

Can't you find out? What did the Saviour say to her?

— "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in—"

That'll do. It was her faith in the Saviour, that He could and would heal her, because she believed He was the Saviour of the world—that brought out of, even the hem of His garment, the healing power, or virtue, that cured her at once. Whereas, the crowd only followed and thronged Him, to see Him work some miracle, and to gaze at Him; but not in faith, to be cured of their plagues. So they were not healed like that woman.

This teaches us, children, that it is of little good to us, to follow Christ as the crowd did. In other words, it won't help us much, but rather the contrary, to say: I am a Christian, and I like to be one, because it is the best and most respectable religion in the world. I don't worship idols as heathens do; but I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and in the Holy Ghost.

Why, children, the devils our Saviour cast out believed as much, and more too; yet, for all that, they still continued devils, only fit for swine and for hell, where "they believe in God and tremble" (*S. James*, Ep. ii. 19).

So, you see, something more is required of us, in order that we be healed of the plague of sin within

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us, by the Saviour. We must come to Him in our heart, quite sure that He can and will heal us, by driving wickedness out of our heart through His Holy Spirit, which He gives to all who ask Him.

But how must we ask? How must we pray? How do you ask for a bit of bread of mother when you are hungry, children?

— Till she gives it.

Why?

— Because we want it.

And you get it at last?

— Yes.

And thank her for it, I trust. Well, that is just what our Saviour says; that, as a father or a mother would not give a stone or a brick, to their child, when he asks for some bread, because they love him—so our heavenly Father, who is better than the best of fathers or mothers, will not deny, but give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, to heal them of sin within (*S. Luke*, xi. 9-14).

But then, one "must ask in faith, nothing wavering" (*S. James*, Ep. i. 5, 6)—ask as the poor woman did when she touched the hem of the Saviour's garment. She didn't doubt in her heart a bit. Then a virtue comes also from Him to us—to children, as well as to grown-up people; and sooner to children, because they have not sinned so long. What did the Saviour say? "Suffer—

— "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not—"

What more?

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— "To come unto Me; for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven" (*S. Matt.* xix. 14).

There, children, you see if mother is sometimes too busy to attend to you, the Saviour is always ready to welcome and bless you, and to give you wisdom liberally—that is, more than you ask for; and "without upbraiding" you—without finding fault with you for being little, and not knowing much as yet. On the contrary: He is all the kinder to children, because they are little, and not very wise.

But let us come back to Capernaum.

While the Saviour was speaking to the woman, and comforting her with His kind words, people came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, who told him his daughter was dead, and that he needn't trouble the Saviour to come.

When the Saviour heard this, He said to the father: "Be not afraid, only believe."

He then came to the house with Peter, James, and John, and found there people weeping and wailing greatly, and said to them: "Why make ye this ado and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth."

But they laughed Him to scorn, because they knew she was dead, and they never before had heard death called "a sleep." They thought the Saviour was "simple," and didn't know the difference.

He then turned them all out, and went in with the father and mother of the little girl into the

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room where she lay dead. He then took her by the hand, and said to her, in the language of Capernaum, Talitha cumi—that is, "Little girl, arise."

And she arose and walked; and they were all astonished, as well they might be — mostly, I should think, those who had just laughed Him to scorn, for saying the child was asleep, and not dead.

You see, children, that our Saviour calls death "a sleep." Why?

Just think.

— Because we shall wake up again?

When?

— At the last day.

— The Resurrection day.

Do you remember anyone else that was dead, of whom our Saviour also said that he only slept?

— Lazarus.

And what did the Saviour say?

— "I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."

Quite right. But did the disciples know what He meant?

— No, they thought he was only asleep; and said: "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well."

But the Saviour called death "a sleep," because in Him is Life everlasting; and He is, you know, the Resurrection and the Life. He that believes in Him in the heart unto righteousness—not as the devils do—shall live for ever with Him in Heaven. He said so to Martha. So it is true.

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And the Saviour calls it "a sleep" only, because He looks forward to the Resurrection, and to His second coming. And as "one day is with Him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 *Pet.* iii. 8), He sees all the dead rising, and risen again; and the time between now and then, is as nothing to Him.

When you go to bed at night, children, do you think of always remaining in it?

— No; of getting up in the morning.

So you are glad to get into bed and to sleep soundly, because you know you will get up again, please God, next morning. You then see, children, that your sleep in the night, is to you only like a short rest between two days—to-day and to-morrow.

So also is death only "a sleep"—a time of rest between now and eternity—for those who believe in Christ, who is the Resurrection and the Life. If our faith is like that of Job, who said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth,"—then, children, we can go in peace to bed, in the grave.

But how would you like to go to bed at night, if you thought you would sleep for ever, and never get up again?

— Not at all. I would rather sit up all night.

— And keep awake.

Of course you would. Yet that is what those do who have no true faith in the Saviour, and who live without God in the world. They never

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think of to-morrow, of the day of the Resurrection; or if they think of it, they don't believe in it. So they try to keep awake and not go to bed in the grave. But can they?

— No; they must die some day.

Of course; but as they don't like to think of it beforehand, they are not ready to go, when death comes and carries them off.

What did little sister Lucy say, just before she died, Nelly; do you remember?

— She said we musn't cry, because she was going to see the Saviour, and be with His angels for ever. But poor mother and we cried, all the same. We couldn't help it.

Of course not, poor things. For our Saviour Himself wept over His friend Lazarus.

And so they did in the house of the ruler of the synagogue, when his little daughter was dead. They wept and wailed greatly; because they were so sorry to see the poor little maid, who was so brisk and lively, now lying dead; so young, too.

But the kind Saviour who said to the widow at Nain, "weep not," also asked these people not to make so much ado, while they wept and wailed so. And He showed them why they ought not to weep in despair, when he brought to them the little maid alive and well.

Because there is now no more death. It is a sleep in Him—between to-day and to-morrow.

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XV.

FEEDING FIVE THOUSAND MEN IN THE WILDERNESS.

S. John, ch. vi. 1 *to the end of* v. 21.

IT was late in March, or early in April, in the third year of our Saviour's ministry on earth; when this miracle took place.

You have often heard the word "ministry," children. What is it.

— A minister?

Not that exactly, though it has to do with it. A "minister," means one who serves; and "ministry" means "service."

Now you remember that our Saviour said to His disciples, that He was not come "to be ministered unto"—that is to be waited upon—"but to minister,"—to serve others. (*S. Matt.* xx. 28.)

He, therefore, "made Himself of no reputation"—people didn't think anything of Him, for some even reviled Him—"but took upon Himself the form of a servant" (*Phil.* ii. 7), and was like one of us,

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And all that, children, for our sakes; when He came to do, not His own will, but the will of the Father who had sent Him, to suffer for us, and to save us. (*S. John*, vi. 38.)

His going about preaching the Gospel, working miracles, and suffering poverty and want, insults and ill-will, and at last, death on the cross—all that was His "ministry," or His "service," on earth; and it lasted three years.

Early in the third year of His ministry, then, the Saviour and His disciples, went over the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias, or the lake of Genesareth—to a plain on the north of it.

That plain slopes upwards from the lake towards the mountain where our Saviour sat down with His disciples; and thither a large multitude followed Him.

When He saw them, so many, so late in the day, and so far from their homes, He had pity on them, lest they should have nothing to eat, and be faint. Because the Saviour always thought of others ere He thought of Himself.

So, although He knew what He would do, yet said He to Philip, to prove him, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"

Philip answered that two hundred pennyworth of bread would not be enough for so many people; even though every one only took a little.

Now, a penny, that was of silver, was worth about sixpence of our money, more or less. So

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that two hundred of those pence, would be about five pounds.

And as bread there, was very cheap, and made into small loaves, like large buns, about twenty for a silver penny—two hundred pence would have bought four thousand such loaves; one of which was too small to satisfy a man's hunger.

Then Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, who thought the Saviour might, perhaps, work a miracle, said: "There is a lad here, with five barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?"

Now, we read that the Passover was at hand; so that the first harvest, that of barley, had not yet begun. Because it began only after the waving of the first fruits of barley, the week after the Passover.

But the crops were more forward at Genesareth than at Jerusalem, because it was warmer. Then, people there, so far from Jerusalem, did pretty much as they liked; so that they had already loaves, or bread, made of barley just reaped.

And as to fish, the lake, as I told you, children, teems with it. So, that people when going to the field to work, take with them a few of their small loaves, and some broiled or fried fish.

Indeed, when I was there, the banks of the lake where our Saviour wrought this miracle, were inhabited by men of the Semakiyeh tribe; men who lived on fish and by fishing.

But as there was only one boat, and that too,

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at Tiberias, at the farther end of the lake, all the big fish were safe in deep water; and only small ones were caught close in shore, with a casting net—a round net; like a large cap, thrown with the hand.

When falling, it spreads on the water, catches every fish under it, then is gently drawn up, and the fish are taken out. But the fishers there are very clever. They never cast their net, as ours do, at a venture—not knowing what they will get. But those fishers on the Sea of Galilee, walk slowly along the beach, in shallow water; and wait until they see a fish; then they cast their net, and seldom miss their fish.

Our Saviour then took the five barley loaves and the two small fishes, gave thanks, and then distributed the loaves and the fish to the disciples, who gave them to the people that were sitting on the grass; about five thousand of them.

And when they had eaten, the Saviour told His disciples to gather up the bits that remained over and above. And they filled twelve baskets with them; which, I dare say, the Saviour gave to the poorest of the people, to take home with them.

Some five or six weeks later, our Saviour also fed four thousand men, besides women and children, with seven loaves and a few small fishes, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. And the disciples picked up also seven baskets full of pieces of bread and fish, that remained, after they all had eaten (*S. Mark* viii. 1-10; *S. Matt.* xv. 32).

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What, then, children, do we learn from these miracles?

First of all, that which our Saviour explained to the people in the synagogue at Capernaum, the day after He had fed the five thousand.

His feeding them abundantly in the wilderness, where they could find nothing to eat—meant, that He is the true Bread of Life that came down from Heaven, to feed us here, in this wilderness world, with His grace, His spirit, His salvation and everlasting life.

And He calls Himself the Bread of Life, because it is He alone who gives us everlasting life; so that our souls could no more do without Him, than our bodies could do without bread. Bread is called "the staff of life"—why, do you know, children?

What is a staff, then?

— A stick.

— To lean upon.

"A stick to lean upon;" and so is bread, that which we depend on for life. We always think of a "cheap loaf;" for when bread is cheap and good, we can do without a good many other things; but we can't live without bread. We lean upon that for food, just as an old man leans upon his staff when he is walking or resting.

And we lean upon the Saviour, during our walk through life, until we reach His kingdom; "for without Him we can do nothing" (*S. John* xv. 4, 5).

Now do you remember another miracle, that was

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also meant as a figure of the true Bread of life, the Saviour? He spoke of it Himself at Capernaum.

— Manna in the wilderness.

What was it?

— God sent it from Heaven every morning, except the Sabbath, while they were in the wilderness.

— It was white, small, round, and tasted like honey cake.

Very good; you see, God fed from Heaven His people in the wilderness; where they must have died of hunger, if He had not so fed them.

What did that mean? Read *S. John* iii. 16, 17.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

"For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved."

And the Saviour said so of Himself: "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (*S. John* xii. 47).

"I am that Bread of Life.

"Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

"I am the living Bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever."

"Then they said unto Him: Lord, evermore give us this bread."

"And Jesus said unto them: I am the Bread of Life; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger,

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and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst" (*S. John* vi. 48, 49, 51, 34, 35).

And now, not a twelvemonth before He was to die on the Cross, in order to give us everlasting life,—He wrought these miracles, of feeding in the wilderness so many men, women, and children, who would have fainted from hunger if He had not fed them there, where they could find nothing to eat.

Why did He do so, think ye?

It was in order to show them He was, and is the Bread of Life, who feeds His people abundantly with "grace for grace," and gives them everlasting life.

And what other lessons, children, do we learn by this miracle?

What came of the bits that were left?—Wasted?

— No, gathered up.

But why? Why did the Saviour, who had just given more than enough bread to eat to so many thousand people, command the remaining bits to be saved?

— To give away?

— To eat at Capernaum?

— To bring to His mother?

Whatever the Saviour did with it—it was to set us an example, and to teach us—"waste not, want not;" for "waste" is wicked, and want is the punishment for it.

What does Scripture say?—"He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand"—that is, careless and wasteful; "but the hand of the diligent maketh

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rich" (*Prov.* x. 4). He that is careful and thrifty, shall always have enough.

If your bit of bread for breakfast, is too big, Willie, what will you do with what remains? throw it away?

— No; 'tis wicked to throw away bread. 'Tis God's gift.

What will you do with it, then?

— Keep it for afterwards.

But if poor little Jemmy, your brother, wanted some?

— I'd give him some of my own; and keep a bit.

You'll do, my boy. Waste nothing, children, but give; and depend upon it, God will see that you never want.

But one more question must I ask you, about our Saviour's miracles of bread in the wilderness.

After giving thanks—and, you see, even the Saviour always said grace before eating—after giving thanks, did He give the bread Himself to the people?

— No, He gave it to His disciples and they gave it to the people?

So also did He send them, His apostles to preach His Gospel, that is—to distribute in the world the glad tidings of salvation through Him,—who is the Bread of Life. Thus teaching us that, it is not anybody and everybody, that can preach the Gospel and teach others: but that one must be duly sent and ordained for it.

You see, children, there was no bread but what

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passed through the Apostles' hands, and was distributed by them.

So also is there no true doctrine and teaching, but in the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ: or what is borrowed from it. The Saviour made the bread; and there was none other. The Apostles distributed it; and no one else did it. Yet other people ate of the fragments that were left.

But we have not yet quite done with this miracle. Can you tell me of one, in the Old Testament, who wrought something like this miracle?

— Twenty loaves of barley?

Which?

— A man brought to Elisha.

Quite right. Read 2 *Kings*, iv. 42.

— "And there came a man from Baal-Shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the first-fruits, twenty loaves of barley."

And the first-fruits were always of barley, that was reaped some two or three weeks before wheat. Go on.

— "and full ears of corn in the husk thereof."

These were wheat ears just getting ripe, and still soft and sweet, of which people are very fond in that country. They rub it in their hands, take it out of "the husk thereof;" and either eat it in their hand, or bruise it between two flat stones, and bake it in the ashes of the fire lighted to cook meat, or to boil eggs for dinner: as I did many a time, while travelling in that country.—Go on.

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"And he said—

Who, "he?"

— Elisha. "And he said, give unto the people, that they may eat."

"And his servitor said"—

Who was that servant?

— Gehazi. "And his servitor said, what, should I set this before an hundred men?"

That is just what Andrew said to the Saviour, about the five barley loaves and the two small fishes—"What are these among so many?"

"He said again, give the people that they may eat: for thus saith the Lord, they shall eat, and shall leave thereof."

"So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the Lord."

You see, children, that miracle was very much like this. It was wrought by the prophet, as a kind of shadow of our Saviour's miracle; by the same power. Only the prophet said: "Thus saith the Lord: they shall eat and shall leave thereof."

Whereas the Lord Himself fed the five thousand in His own power; and then said "Gather up the fragments that remain,"—twelve baskets full.

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XVI.

WALKING ON THE SEA.

S. John, vi. 14 *to* 21.

WHEN the people had seen the wonderful miracle the Saviour had wrought—feeding so many men, women, and children in the wilderness—in a wild country where no one lived, they said, "This is, of a truth, that Prophet that should come into the world."

What did they mean, do you think? Who was "that prophet?"

— Elias?

Not far wrong, child. For when S. John the Baptist came, people were, as you read yesterday, "in expectation," that is, waiting and looking for some great man or prophet; and wondering if John the Baptist was "Elias or that prophet" (*S. John*, i. 21)—who, do you think?

— The Christ.

Right. "Christ," you know, is in Greek—the language in which the New Testament was written—the same as "Messiah" in Hebrew, the tongue spoken of old by the Jews. Now, the prophets

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wrote in the Old Testament, about the coming of the Messiah or Christ; and Daniel the prophet foretold exactly the year in which He was to come.

So that everybody was looking out for His coming about that time.

The Scribes and Pharisees, those who were learned in the Old Testament, were looking for the Messiah, who, they thought, was to be a great king; but the poor people, who could not read, only knew that some great Man, whom they called Prophet, was expected to come. So they were "in expectation" of some one.

Only, when the Saviour Christ, the Messiah came, the Scribes and Pharisees, and the great people at Jerusalem, didn't believe in Him, because He was not the great king they fancied he would be; but the poor people loved and honoured Him, because He was one of them, and so kind to them; and they thought Him a Great Prophet.

So that you remember when He made His entrance into Jerusalem (*S. Matt.* xxi. 8) the multitudes that went before and behind Him, cried: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest."

Then the Scribes and Pharisees, and all the great people there, said, "Who is this?" But the multitude answered: "This is Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth, of Galilee." And some of these people had been fed by Him here in the wilderness, and

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had said He was "that prophet that should come into the world"—the prophet they were looking for.

And when they had seen Him work this miracle, and feed them all so easily and so cheaply, they thought He was the best king they could have—much better than Herod or Philip, or any of the governors who ground them down, and who starved them instead of feeding them as the Saviour had just done. So they thought of making Him king over them.

But, as the Saviour said to Pilate (*S. John*, xviii. 36), "My kingdom is not of this world;" when He heard what they wished to do, He told His disciples to get into the boat, and cross over to Capernaum; while He departed again into a mountain Himself alone, so that the people shouldn't find Him, and make Him king.

But the disciples had to row some six or eight miles or more, to get to Capernaum. And when they got near the middle of the lake, a high wind rose from the land of Genesareth, where Capernaum lay, so that they could make no way against the wind and the waves, however hard they might row.

But the Saviour saw them from the mountain where He was—and in the night too—thus toiling in rowing, and unable to get to land because of the gale of wind blowing against them, unless He came and helped them.

So, between three and four o'clock in the morning,

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before daylight, He came to them walking on the waves of the sea. But when the disciples saw Him thus walking on the water, they thought it was a spirit or a ghost, and they cried out for fear (*S. Mark*, vi. 48, 49).

Then the Saviour said to them, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." Then they were no more afraid, but were glad when they heard His voice and knew it was He. And they gladly took Him in the boat with them. Then the wind ceased, and they soon came to land.

And they were very much astonished and wondered; for their heart was hardened, so that they did not consider the miracle of the loaves wrought the day before (*S. Mark*, vi. 51, 52).

They did not stop to think, that He who had fed five thousand men with five barley loaves, could also walk on the sea, and lay the waves and the wind; neither did they remember He had done so once before, on that same lake, when crossing over to the Gadarenes.

It was very strange, children, that they should be so "slow of heart," as He said to two of them, after His resurrection (*S. Luke*, xxiv. 25), that they should company with Him every day, see Him work His miracles, and hear His beautiful parables, and yet not see who He was, and believe in Him as they ought.

But what does this miracle teach us, little people?

You remember what I said to you about the boat

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in which He and His disciples were, and that it was a kind of figure of His Church on earth, whereof He is Captain, and His apostles are the sailors. And how the Church is, as it were, tossed to and fro by persecution and affliction, and trouble, because the world hates her, as it hated Him. But, then, in spite of all that, she, and all in her, are safe with Him, and are sure to land in His own country, Heaven.

This time, however, the Saviour was not with the disciples in the boat; and they alone could make no way against the wind and waves. But He was watching them, and came to them, walking on the sea. And directly they had Him with them, they ceased toiling in rowing to no purpose; for the water was calm, and they landed safe.

It was to teach them that "without Him they could do nothing." That in all the troubles and persecutions they would have to suffer while preaching the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles, He would be with them, help them, and bring them safe out of them all, to His own Throne in Heaven. And that after they had left this world, He still would continue to be with them, that is, with His Church, "alway, even unto the end" of time.

And so He is now, watching her from on high, and present with her in His spirit.

He sees her afflicted, militant, that is, battling with the world, as the disciples did with the waves; and, as it should be, so long as she is here on earth. But when she has toiled and has been tossed long

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enough by the wind and the waves of trouble that cannot sink her, because she is His own Church for which He died—He will come down to her and steer her safe into port.

But by "the Church of Christ," children, we understand the people that are in her, and for whom the Saviour cares.

So He cares for you who belong to His Church; who are, so to speak, in the boat of the apostles. And when He sees you, children, in trouble, or in pain, He knows all about it. You mayn't think so at the time, because you don't see Him any more than the apostles saw Him in the dark, far away on the mountain. But He sees you as He saw them, and He watches over you from His Heaven on high; as He watched over them from the mountain.

And He won't let you suffer or be troubled a bit more than He thinks good for you; but when He sees you have been tried long enough to learn to do His will, then He will make a way for you out of your trouble.

There's that poor Sarah Randall in the lane, you all know. When her mother died, she seemed to have lost everything, for her father had been dead many years, and she hadn't "a friend in the world."

But she had One in Heaven, and a Father too. She had learnt that at school, and never forgot it. So that in her trouble she prayed to Him, and told Him she was a poor friendless orphan, without bread to eat, or a home to go to.

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He knew all that, and more too; for He knew what He was going to do for her.

He moved the heart of a neighbour to pity her, to give her a home where she was well taken care of and happy. And as she had been well brought up by a good mother, and had learnt early to love and fear God and her Saviour, she was known and respected throughout the parish, as a good, well-conducted girl.

A lady in the neighbourhood, who was looking for a trustworthy, respectable girl to look after her children, heard of her. She wrote to inquire, and took her into her service, where she is well cared for, and as happy as she can be.

Because that lady also fears and loves God, and knows she is accountable to Him for the way she treats her servants. So she is kind and just, and equal towards them. And Sarah Randall says that, although she often thinks of mother, yet she is much better off and happier than if she had remained at home.

And the Saviour did for that girl, over whom He watched, because she was a disciple of His—she loved and obeyed Him—what He does for every member of His Church, that is also a disciple of His. He watches over us all, old and young; and sees us when we are tossed to and fro by the wind and waves of trouble and sorrow. But if we are His disciples—if we learn of Him, love Him, and do what He tells us in His word—then, children, we need fear nothing.

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Just when we think troubles come thick upon us, and we can make no way against them, we shall hear His sweet and clear voice through the howling of the wind, saying to us: "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

And with Him we shall soon be at peace, and safe.

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XVII.

THE WOMAN OF CANAAN.

S. Matt. xv. 21 *to* 29.

FROM Capernaum our Saviour went to visit the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, about two days' journey on foot, through a beautiful country of hill and dale, of woods, meadows, and running streams.

That country was called Galilee, and as it was very rich and beautiful, many people came from all parts to live in it on their farms, where they reared beautiful cattle, and reaped plentiful crops of all kinds.

Our Saviour then walked through that country, and came to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, on the Great Sea, called the Mediterranean Sea, on your school maps. It is so called because it is, as it were, in the midst of sundry lands or countries, namely, Spain on the west, France, Italy, Greece, and Asia Minor on the north; Syria and the Holy Land on the east; and Egypt and Africa on the south.

Now the sea-coast between the two ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon was low, compared with the high

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mountains of Lebanon, and with the hills of Galilee, that rise at the back of it.

So that coast was called "Canaan," that means, "low-land," and the people who lived there were call "Canaanites." But by-and-by people came to call the whole country Canaan, although that name properly belonged only to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

You know something, children, about those two cities, don't you?

Sidon, now called Saïd, is one of the oldest cities in the world. It was built by Sidon, the son of Canaan, and grandson of Ham, Noah's youngest son (*Gen.* x. 6, 15). Sidon and Bethsaida, on the sea of Galilee, mean pretty nearly the same thing—a draught of fishes, and a fishing-place, because both those coasts abound in fish.

Sidon became a large city, whither people came to trade from all parts, in ships and by land, but now it is a poor, small town, and nothing remains of the old city but a part of the harbour, built of stones as large as rocks.

And Tyre, whose name means "a Rock," was built some twenty miles lower down the coast, at the end of the lowland of Canaan. The city was first built upon a rock inland, near the shore; and by-and-by, another city was built upon a small island opposite, and joined to the mainland by a causeway—a high road built above the sea—like a long jetty, as you see at the harbour.

But in time Tyre grew very great and rich;

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and also very proud, and was punished for her pride.

God sent His prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, and others, who prophesied that Tyre and Sidon should fall from their greatness; that the beautiful temples and buildings of Tyre should be destroyed, and that fishermen should spread their nets to dry, where once all those beautiful buildings stood. And all is come true to the letter (*Is.* xxiii; *Ez.* xxvii. etc). I was there and saw it.

But why, children, think ye, were those cities destroyed?

— Because they were proud?

Yes; and God hates pride. What does He say? Read *Prov.* xi. 2.

— "When pride cometh, then cometh shame; but with the lowly is wisdom."

And ch. xvi. 18th verse.

— "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

And it always is so, children, with people as well as with nations, when they are proud, and don't fear God. You see the mighty cities of Sidon and of Tyre, that sent their ships even to Cornwall, have come to nothing. The Empire of Rome that ruled all over the world, has come to nothing. And you may be sure, children, that England, that is so proud of her riches, will also come down to very little, if she does not repent in good time, and honour God more than she does at present.

But about half way between Sidon and Tyre,

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there was on the hills a small town called Zarephath, that means "a foundry;" because there was brass worked there, and sent about the world in "ships of Tarshish"—that is in merchant ships, that sailed from Tyre and from Sidon.

Does any one of you, children, remember anything about Zarephath? whither did Elijah go when the brook dried, and the ravens came no more with bread and meat every day?

— To a widow woman, who picked sticks.

Where?

— At the gate of—

Of this very place, Zarephath. God had told the woman to feed the prophet (1 *Kings*, xvii. 9), and told His prophet, Elijah, to go thither and be fed by her. And how did He do it? Don't you remember?

— Elijah asked her to fetch him some water and a morsel of bread.

But she said she had none, only a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse, and that she was picking a few sticks to bake a cake for herself and her son, and then die. Because, you remember, there was a sore famine in the land; and no rain fell on the earth because of the wickedness of the king Ahab, and of his queen Jezebel.

Then Elijah said to her: "Fear not; do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after, make for thee and for thy son.

"For thus saith the Lord God of Israel: The

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barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth." And so it came to pass (v. 16).

So you see, children, God sent Elijah to a widow woman of Canaan, who was a Gentile, in order to be fed by her, and to save her and her son alive.

And what was that, but a sort of figure of our Saviour Himself, also going thither as He now did, to work a miracle on a woman of Canaan, who also was a Gentile; in order to show that He was and is the Saviour of all men, and not of Jews only.

No sooner was He come, than a woman of those parts—perhaps of Zarephath also—heard of it, and came to Him, saying: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil"—she was very ill and had fits.

But the Saviour said nothing. It looked unkind, but it wasn't. Meanwhile, the disciples said to Him: "Send her away, for she crieth after us."

He then answered that He was "sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Who were they, children, think ye?

— The lost sheep the Good Shepherd went after?

Not that one, child, think again.

— To the ninety and nine in the wilderness?

Not that either. Those lost sheep of the house of Israel to whom the Saviour was sent with glad tidings of salvation, were those with whom the

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Jews would have nothing to do—Gentiles, Samaritans, Galileans, and such like.

The Jews wouldn't speak to them, but the Saviour would, because He came to seek and to save the lost, "to call sinners, and not the righteous, to repentance."

Righteous?—are there any righteous—really righteous?

— No, not one.

What can this mean, then?

It means those who think themselves righteous, as the Pharisees did, when they compared themselves with the publicans; and as the Jews did, when they thought and spoke of Gentiles and Samaritans. And as they also spoke of the Saviour Himself, when they said to Him: "Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil."

But He didn't care for that. He came to save men of all nations. So He went to the Gadarenes to seek for lost sheep there; He went to Samaria to visit the people of Sychar; He went about Galilee preaching His Gospel to those who were out of the way and forgotten.

And He now came to where He had sent His prophet, on the same errand of mercy to meet this poor woman, and to heal her daughter. But also, to teach His apostles that they were not to call "common or unclean" those whom He was come to save; as we saw, you remember, in the case of Peter and Cornelius (*Acts*, x.).

But, though the Saviour said nothing to the

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poor woman, she saw in His eye and manner, that He was kind. So she drew nearer to Him, and fell at His feet, saying: "Lord, help me!"

Yet even then He did not help her at once, as He had helped the leper and the man sick of the palsy, and others. But He said to her: "It is not meet,"—that is, right or proper—"to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs."

But her answer was ready. "Truth Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

What could that have to do with it, children? Who were the masters, who the dogs, and what were those crumbs the dogs ate?

The masters were the Jews; the dogs were the Gentiles; and the crumbs were the blessings the Gentiles should receive through the Jews, as I have told you before.

Because the Saviour, who was a Jew, came to save the Jews first—but they wouldn't have Him; they put Him to death. The Gentiles, however, were and are, thankful to hear of Him, that He came to save them, and they believed in Him, when the Jews wouldn't.

But the Saviour said that, only to try that woman's faith, and to let His disciples see it. Is it fair or right, said He to her, that I, a Jew, should grant a favour, or work a miracle among outcasts from My own people?

True, Lord, said she, but those outcasts have right to Thee as their Saviour, the One, God said

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to Abraham, in whom all nations of the earth should be blessed.

So you see, children, that woman living out there in Canaan, had heard of the promise God had made to Abraham—that one of his sons should be the Saviour of the whole world—and she believed it. Then she also believed that Jesus, the Saviour, was the Christ, the true Messiah: and so she came to Him, and said: "Lord, help me;" for although I am a Canaanite, and not a Jew, art Thou not my Saviour, nevertheless?

Then the Saviour answered and said to her: "O, woman, great is thy faith: be it done unto thee even as thou wilt." And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Then she went home and found her daughter quite well. And she was glad, children, you may be sure, and felt very happy. Why, do you think?

— Because her daughter was well?

Of course that; but also for something else besides.

— Because the Saviour was kind to her?

Of course, that too; yet still for something else. Because the Saviour had said to her: "O, woman, great is thy faith," and because He had cured her daughter, as a reward for her faith in Him.

This miracle then, teaches us, little people, as we have already seen many times, that the Saviour never turns away those who come to Him in true faith, as those poor people did. They believed He

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was the Saviour promised to Abraham, and that He could and would heal and help them.

And that made them humble and respectful. They worshipped Him, and fell at His feet, to show how lowly they felt before Him, and they called Him Master and Lord.

The nobleman at Capernaum did not send for Him as for a parish doctor, to come and heal his son; But he went himself, a long journey, out of respect, and said to Him: "Sir,"—but properly—"Lord, come down ere my child die." And I dare say he had brought a horse for the Lord to ride.

Then Jairus, though a great man as ruler of the synagogue, yet came and fell at the Saviour's feet, and besought Him greatly to come and heal his daughter.

Then, also, the centurion did not think himself worthy of coming himself to the Saviour, or of receiving Him under his roof; But he sent elders of the Jews to Him, and begged He would only say the word, and his servant would be healed.

And so with all those who came to Him in faith; they came, like the poor lepers, with great respect, and worshipped Him. They were not afraid of Him, but they fell at His feet, and worshipped Him, and paid Him all the honour they could, because they loved Him.

You see, children, what great, great difference that faith made between those who believed in Him, and those who did not. Those who, like the

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Scribes and Pharisees, and the Jews in general, did not believe in Him, showed Him no respect, but called Him only "the carpenter's son," or they reviled Him, and called Him a Samaritan.

But then, see how they behaved, who believed in Him. They called Him "the Son of David," "the Son of God," the Saviour. So they loved, honoured, and worshipped Him, and fell at His feet, in order to humble themselves as much as they could before Him, their Lord and Saviour.

So with us, children, and so with the world around us. Some don't believe in Him, and don't care about Him, though they call themselves Christians. Others believe in Him and love Him, and worship Him, and would do all they can for Him, because He is their Lord and Saviour.

So then, little people, don't be afraid of Him who said: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven" (*S. Mark*, x. 13, 14). But love Him, and worship Him as the Son of God, your Saviour.

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XVIII.

HEALING THE DEAF AND DUMB.

S. Mark, vii. 31 *to the end.*

OUR Saviour, after having healed the daughter of the Canaanitish woman, for which purpose He had gone to visit the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, came back to the Sea of Galilee, through the Decapolis.

Decapolis means "ten cities." They were ten cities on either side of the Sea of Galilee and of Jordan, whose inhabitants had agreed to hold together, and to be friends.

Damascus, of which you read in the Acts, was one of them; and so was also Gadara, in the country of the Gadarenes. Most of them were in the Galilee of the Gentiles—that is, you know, the part of Galilee most out of the way, inhabited chiefly by heathens.

But, as our Saviour went over the Sea of Galilee to the country of the Gadarenes to cast the devils out of Legion, and to do what good He could to other people there—so, also now, came He back to His own city, Capernaum, through a wild part of the country to bless the inhabitants thereof.

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While here, they brought Him one that was deaf and dumb. He couldn't talk because he couldn't hear, like other deaf and dumb people, they can't speak, because they never heard. But if they once could hear when little children, and lost their hearing before they could speak plain, they would forget all about it, and become dumb as well as deaf.

We have some in the parish. You all know poor Willie Dale; I remember when he could hear quite well, when little; but he had an illness that destroyed the inside of his ears, and ever since, he has been stone deaf and also dumb. He can only talk with his fingers.

It is a great affliction to be deaf, far worse than to be dumb, seeing we are told (*S. James*, iii. 8) that "the tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison," and that, therefore, we ought to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (ch. i. 19). For "in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin; but he that refraineth his lips is wise" (*Prov.* x. 19).

And deaf and dumb people feel their affliction very much; they see others around them talking and laughing together, but they are like statues among them, and can't join in the laugh, because they don't know what it is all about; and that makes them, most times, ill-tempered.

They deserve great pity, and they receive it. People are kind to them, and there are schools where they are taught to read, to write, to sum,

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and to work at trades, all through talking with the fingers.

But in the days of our Saviour none of all that was done for deaf and dumb people. They were thought to be possessed with an unclean spirit, or devil, and were treated as such.

And such was the man whom they brought to the Saviour to be healed. For we read in *S. Matt.* ix. 32, xii. 32, and *S. Luke*, xi. 14, that when the devil was cast out of a man who was dumb, or blind and dumb, they could hear, and see and hear also.

The Saviour then took him apart from the multitude, put His fingers into his ears, spit, and touched his tongue, and, looking up to heaven, said: "Ephphatha," that is, in the language our Saviour spoke, "Be opened." And straightway he heard and spake plain.

The people were then beyond measure astonished, and said: "He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

Our Saviour thus put His fingers into the man's ears, and touched his tongue, in order that the people should see Him work the miracle; for He could have cured the man just as well, without touching him. But then the people wouldn't have seen Him do it; and He wished them to see Him work the miracle, in order to show them, who He was.

But for us, children, what does it mean?

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If you speak to old Lizzie Parker, who is stone deaf, what does she answer ?

— Nothing ; she shakes her head.

Why ?

— Because she can't hear a bit.

— The other day she was all but run over by a man driving a cart, who shouted to her ; but she didn't hear.

She can't hear a word you say ; and all but met with a bad accident because she can't hear.

Well, children, what else is our poor natural heart but stone deaf "as to things that belong unto our salvation," until it is touched by the grace of God ? Until the Saviour, so to speak, puts His fingers into a man's ears, by touching his heart, that man can't and won't hear anything about God and Heaven and the Saviour ; and never speaks of them, except in oaths and curses.

You know Drake Miller; what a desperate man he was. He is tamed down a bit, now ; but how is it ?

— He had his leg cut off at the hospital.

Why ?

— Because he broke it when he ran away from the policeman, because he had stolen old Lizzie Parker's ducks.

— Then his leg, it got bad ; and they cut it off for him.

— And now he can't run away.

But now, children, why all that ?

— Because he was very wicked.

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Stop. Why, then, was he so wicked?

— Because he would hearken to nothing, and to nobody.

Now, you have it. His heart was stone deaf, and he wouldn't hearken; no, not even hear, anything like good advice. His heart was like that of Nabal, of whom we read in 1 Sam. xxv.—a heart of stone; and as "Nabal" means "a fool," Drake Miller was somewhat like him.

It was of no use saying anything to him. I tried several times to persuade him to give up his drink, swearing, and wicked ways. But all to no purpose.

"Let alone that talk of yours," he would say, "'t'aint Sunday for me to be preached to."—"That'll do, sir, thank you."

As good, kind talk wouldn't do for him, God tried something else.

Since he wouldn't hearken to anyone but to his bad companions, he got from bad to worse. But as it is far worse to be deaf of heart, than hard of hearing like poor Lizzie, Drake Miller didn't escape being hurt, as she did—because being deaf was not her fault—but he met with a bad accident which he never will forget; because of his wickedness.

Instead of running away across country for fear of being caught for thieving, Drake Miller now hobbles about on crutches, and wishes with all his heart he had his leg again. But he never will; he will be a cripple for the rest of his days.

It has done him good, however; when I speak

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to him now, it isn't—"Let alone that talk of yours; I've had enough of it, plenty,"—but "Thank you, sir; I wish I'd hearkened to you and others before now; may be I'd have my leg still. 'Twould be better than these 'ere crutches."

No, Drake, it wouldn't. Had you still your leg, you who wouldn't hearken, "but hardened your neck when reproved, might have been suddenly cut off; and that without remedy," as Scripture says. (*Prov.* xxix. 1.) But God had pity on you, and has cut off your leg to keep you back from worse ways. Yours were bad enough.

"Sure enough, sir. I hope it'll be better now. Thank you 'umbly."

So do I hope it will. Our Saviour says, you know, "it is better for us that one of our members perish, and not that our whole body be cast into hell." (*S. Matt.* v. 29-30.)

And as Drake Miller begins to hear good advice, and likes to have the Bible read to him, so also, like the deaf and dumb, who began to speak as soon as he could hear, does Drake Miller ask questions about how he can become a better man than he is yet.

I also heard him rebuke Jack Staples for using bad language, and Bill Warren for telling a lie.

"There, you Jack Staples, don't you talk so. 'Tis no good. Look at me and these 'ere crutches. 'Tis all bad language and bad ways as done it, so mind."

"And you, Bill, why, little Lucy Neale was

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reading in the Bible, somewhere, that "the tongue as tells lies shall be cut off." (*Prov.* x. 31, xii. 19.) When I was a boy like you, no one did tell me anything. So I went on telling lies, and minding no one. I am very sorry for it now. So, there, don't you do as I did, 'xcept you like to lose your leg."

"It ain't no odds, if I tell a lie," said Bill Warren.

"Ain't it, though?" replied Drake Miller. "God hears you; and mind you, your sin will find you out, as sure as God is in heaven."

So you see, children, it is almost like a miracle to hear Drake Miller give good words or good advice to anyone; he who was so wicked.

But it all comes through the grace of God having touched his heart, through his accident and his illness. That made him hear what he couldn't and wouldn't hear before. And as he hears so also does he speak.

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XIX.

HEALING THE BLIND MAN OF BETHSAIDA.

S. Mark, viii. 22, *to the end of* v. 26.

HERE, children, we read that one day, in the third year of our Lord's ministry, He happened to be at Bethsaida, when they brought Him a blind man, and asked the Saviour to make him see.

So He led the blind man out of the town, spat upon his eyes, put His hands upon them, and then asked him if he saw aught—that is, anything. And the man said he saw men as trees walking. Because he could not see plain.

Then the Saviour again put His hands upon his eyes, and told him to look up. And he then saw everything quite plain.

You see, children, the Saviour did at once what they begged Him to do. He took the blind man by the hand, led him out, and then began to heal him.

But then, why didn't He cure him at once, as He did blind Bartimeus and others? Why did He do it a little at a time?

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You remember I said that our Saviour's miracles on the bodies of people, were a figure of what He does to our souls through His Holy Spirit.

Now a blind man can't see anything; he can't tell night from day, nor enjoy any of God's beautiful works, as those do who can see.

You, children, who see, think it a matter of course, and never give a thought to it.

You open your eyes, and see everything far and near, and don't think of poor blind people, because you don't know what it is to be blind. You can't tell how blind people feel who have never seen the light of day, nor fields and flocks, hills and meadows, lovely flowers and pretty butterflies; who have never seen a bird or an animal of any kind, nor a man, woman, or child.

So when blind people hear others talking together of all they see, it makes their heart ache. Those who were born blind, sigh because they never saw any of what they hear others talk; and those who once saw, but became blind afterwards, weep because they no longer see what they once delighted in.

There's that poor little Willie Brindle, who lost his sight after the scarlet fever. Don't you see how he sits still while you are playing about him, laughing and merry? He does not laugh, because he can't see the game you are playing; and he is sad, not merry, when he hears you laugh and run about, and remembers how he used to do the same, and play with you, not so long ago.

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Well, children, faith in the Saviour is called "the eyes of the mind," because it makes us understand what we never understood before. So that those who have not that faith in the Saviour have their understanding still darkened, and can't understand anything about Him.

Let me explain it to you a little better, although I already did so when teaching you the Parables.

Your mind is that which makes you understand and think; your heart is that which makes you feel glad or sorry, angry or pleased; and your soul is the living soul you have received from God, and that can never die.

You understand all that; it is not very hard.

Well, now, suppose I said to you when I went away, I shall bring every child in the village a present when I return home. Some would believe me, and, perhaps, some wouldn't; I can't tell why.

You would believe me, I know. And because you believed what I said, you would begin at once to talk about it, and wonder what it could be.

And if I said it would be a book, then you would picture to yourselves what kind of book, and how bound, with or without pictures. You see, your faith in me and in my promise to you, would make you "look" forward to my present, though you couldn't tell exactly what it was like, until you saw it.

Those, however, who did not believe me or my promise, would not give a thought to it, or to me.

But you who believed me, and that I would not

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deceive you, would think and say: "That's kind of him;" and that would make you feel kindly towards me in your heart. And when you got your present, you would all think you had done well to believe and trust me, and that you had now got your reward.

You now see how your faith in me made you "look" forward to my present, and made you feel kindly towards me.

So also, children, with God our Father in Heaven. If we believe what He says to us in His Word about His love for us, and about His Son whom He sent to save us, and about the Kingdom of Heaven He promises us, we shall look forward to it, and we shall love Him for it.

But if we don't believe Him and His Word, then we shall not love Him, nor think anything of His Kingdom in Heaven; but we shall live without Him in the world; and if we live without Him, we shall also die without Him.

You now begin to understand, children, how faith is "the eyes of the mind." And just as what you like to see pleases you, and makes you feel happy, so also, when you look to God's promise of the Kingdom of Heaven, it makes you feel happy, and makes you love Him.

But we poor sinners are, so to speak, born blind. We cannot look to God's promises, and love Him, unless He helps us.

Can a blind man open his own eyes?

— No; some one must open them for him.

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So, also, must God do for us. He must open the eyes of our mind—that is, give us faith in His promises in Christ our Saviour; for our own natural heart could no more do that for itself, than a blind man could open his own eyes.

And God does it by sending His Holy Spirit, or grace, into our hearts.

Sometimes He does it at once, and men are turned, or converted, from their evil ways, as it were by a flash of God's Spirit.

Yet not often so. God does it oftener by degrees, a little at a time. Because a flash of lightning often leaves us in greater darkness than before; but we don't get blinded by the sun rising, when we watch it from the dawn, because our eyes get used to it, and we see better and better.

You remember Jem Blakes, and what sort of a man he was. He seemed to love to do wickedness, and he certainly lived without God in the world, and never told His name but to swear by it.

Well, he went to one of those revivals, as people call them, and heard preaching and singing, and saw people crying and jumping and howling. That seemed to tell on him, and he thought himself a converted man.

He certainly was better for a bit, and he took the pledge. But it didn't last long. He soon broke it, drank as much as ever, and is now, I fear, a worse man than before.

But you also know old Betsy Durdle. Well, I can remember the time when she was "no better

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than she need be," as people say. Nay, she was a great deal worse than she ought ever to have been, and set a shocking example to old and young alike.

But she had a stroke, and that brought her to a better mind. She was afraid to die, such as she was, and she then hearkened to good advice. She took to reading her Bible, and as she read, she wished to know more about it. The more she read of the Gospel, and of what the Saviour had done for her, the more she saw she had led a very bad life before.

Through God's grace she repented truly, and mended her ways in earnest. She kept her tongue quiet, and didn't gossip half so much about other people's affairs, trying to find out all the mischief she could; and if she didn't find any, to invent it. She began telling the truth instead of stories, and instead of prating to children and to young people, all about what she used to do when she was young, she now warns them against bad examples, and gives them the best advice she can.

But she improved slowly. So she really is a better woman than she was. Remember, children, that in most things "quick come" is also "quick gone." A mushroom grows in a night, but it takes a hundred years for an oak to grow and yield good timber. Yet which of the two is most useful, the mushroom or the oak?

— The oak.

And see how long it takes you to grow! How

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many years until you are as tall as father and mother! Now, if you were to grow as tall as they in one month, or one year, you wouldn't live long.

See also, how long it takes for corn to grow and ripen for harvest.

First, nothing; while the corn is in the earth, being softened with rain and sunshine. Then a tiny little green tip, you can hardly see, peering above ground; then a green blade of grass; then the haulm; then the ear; then the bloom; then the corn well kerned in the ear; then the whole plant turning yellow, to show it is ripe; then the harvest.

See how many things, ere it has grown, been gathered, ground and baked into bread.

So also, goodness, children, does not come into the heart all at once, in a hurry. Our heart is much too hard for that. The seed of God's Word has to fall into a corner of good, soft ground, where it can abide, and then bring forth fruit with patience.

And it grows and ripens without making a noise.

So also when the grace of God comes into the heart, and works there, it makes no noise, but shows itself outside, by good works. The better a man is, children, the less noise he makes, and the less he talks of himself. He lets his works show what he is. And he tries to do good, slowly, quietly, surely. He would rather be like a gentle rain, to soften the ground and make things

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grow around him, than be like a thunder-shower, that lays the corn, or washes the seed off the ground.

And our Saviour taught us all this, by letting the blind man of Bethsaida first see men as trees walking, and then afterwards making him see everything quite plain.

If when He sends His Holy Spirit into our heart, we don't "quench it," or put it out, by doing what displeases Him, then He sends us more of it. We go, as S. Paul says, "from faith to faith" (*Rom.* i. 17). God opens "the eyes of our mind" more and more, to see clearly what good we ought to do, in order to please Him; and what evil we ought to eschew, in order to save ourselves trouble now, and hereafter.

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XX.

MONEY IN THE FISH'S MOUTH.

S. Matt. xvii. 24 *to the end.*

A FEW months later — in September — our Saviour happened to be coming in at the gate of Capernaum, when one of those that received tribute-money came to Peter, and asked him if his Master did not pay tribute.

What was that "tribute," children?

— Tribes?

— The tribes of Israel?

You answer without thinking; how can tribes be money?

Tribute, however, was a tax gathered tribe by tribe; hence it was called "tribute" or "tribe money," paid as a tax.

And what is a tax?

— Rates, and that.

A tax is a sum of money, paid by almost everybody, to pay for the army and navy, and such public expenses. Some taxes are very heavy, and hard to pay; especially for poor people.

And as tax-gatherers always tried to get something for themselves besides the tax itself, and were very hard upon the poor, they were hated

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and despised, and went by the name of "publicans." You often read in the Gospel of "publicans and sinners;" the worst of the people.

But this tribute-money at Capernaum was not collected by tax-gatherers or toll-keepers, like Matthew, who "sat there at the receipt of custom," or toll.

But this tribute-money—about fifteen pence of our money—was a poll-tax, or head-tax, paid by every man above twenty, for the service of the tabernacle in the wilderness, and afterwards of the Temple at Jerusalem. It was so ordered by God to Moses and the people, as we find in *Exod.* xxx. 13, 14, 15, and xxxviii. 26.

It was not much money for one to pay; but when paid by almost every man, it ran up to a large sum.

A grain of corn is not much, children, is it? But if everybody in the parish brought one, it would fill a peck, and that made into flour and bread, might keep some one from starving. So also with rates and taxes; though they be more than a grain of corn from every one.

So when the Saviour and the disciples were come into the house, He, knowing what Peter was asked, and what he answered, said to him: "What thinkest thou, Simon; of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?"

Peter answered: "Of strangers." "Then," said the Saviour, "the children are free."

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What did He mean, think ye? For whom was this tribute-money gathered? For the Roman Emperor who then ruled over the country—or for God, to whom the country belonged?

— For God's House.

Right; that is, for His service; for Him. Therefore the Saviour, as Son of God, need not have paid it, because He, as Son, was free.

What did He do then? Did He not pay it?

— Yes, He did. He told Peter to go to the sea, to cast a hook, and to open the mouth of the first fish he caught, and he would find some money in it; and then give it for himself and for the Saviour.

Very good. But what did the Saviour say? Read v. 27.

— "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them—"

Stop. "Notwithstanding"—that is—although I need not pay the money unless I like, yet I will do so, lest I should offend them; lest they should think it strange that I did not pay.

Now, what does this teach us, children?

Not only that our Saviour and the disciples were so poor, that He had to work a miracle in order to pay the tribute-money, but also—that He did not wish to hurt people's feelings needlessly, and to look strange.

But, as we saw that He went into the synagogue with the rest, and in bad company, too, on Sabbath days, because it was the custom thus to go to the

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parish church—so also in this case, He followed the custom, though He needn't have done so, unless He chose.

He thought if He didn't pay, they wouldn't be able to make it out, but would think it strange, and be hurt. So rather than do that, He wrought a miracle, and paid the money for Himself and for Peter; because, perhaps, Peter alone of the disciples, was old enough for the tax; or because he was the one to whom the tax-gatherers had spoken about it.

Here then, children, is a lesson for us. "If it be possible as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men" (*Rom.* xii. 18). Rather to give way, when it is not against our conscience, than stand out, and, perhaps, hurt other people's feelings.

Little Tommy there, likes to sit next to his bigger brother, though it is not his place in the school, and Jem Drakes, next to him, is quite right not to mind it, but to let him sit there. Everybody knows it is Jemmy's place, but that he gives it up to the little fellow, rather than hurt his feelings.

So also, children, people older than you often grumble at having to pay rates and taxes, which are sometimes very heavy, but the Saviour sets us an example of what His apostle tells us to do.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." "For this cause pay ye tribute also. Render, therefore, to all their dues; tribute to

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whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (*Rom.* xiii. 1-9).

And our Saviour further teaches us, children, in all things that are good or harmless, to follow the customs of the place we live in. People who like to be strange and unlike the rest, often are so from pride or conceit; and make themselves very foolish in the eyes of sensible people.

Remember the words of the Saviour, who was free from paying tribute:—"Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them—take that money, and give unto them for Me and thee."

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XXI.

THE MAN BORN BLIND.

S. John, ix. 1, *to the end of* v. 7, *or the whole chapter.*

A MONTH after, in October, our Saviour was at Jerusalem, and passing by, saw a man blind from his birth—who was born blind, and had never seen anything.

Then His disciples asked Him, whether the man himself had sinned or his parents, that he was born blind.

One can't very well see, children, how that poor beggar could have sinned before he was born, so as to deserve to be born blind. Perhaps the disciples asked the question in a hurry, and without thinking—most likely. For although all men are born in sin, yet they are not all born blind.

But the disciples were right about the sins of his parents. For not only does God say in His law (*Exod.* xx.) that, He visits "the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate" Him—but we see this every day. We see how the children of drunkards and other bad livers, come into the world ailing, sickly, and how poorly they grow up.

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We also see how the children of wicked parents are brought up, or rather grow up, in all manner of wickedness, and think it all right, because they have not been taught differently. It is not their fault, but the parents' fault. So they grow up with their parents' sins and their own on themselves, and thus grow more and more wicked from father to son, and from mother to daughter—diseased, idiots, or ill-favoured.

Our Saviour, however, said to the disciples, that the man was not born blind for his own fault, or that of his parents. But "that the works of God should be made manifest in him"—that is, that the Saviour should give him sight, by working a miracle that should have a meaning for others, as well as for the man himself.

And before working the miracle, our Saviour told His disciples what it was meant for. "As long as I am in the world," said He, "I am the light of the world." And He was going to make people understand it, if they would.

So He spat on the ground, made clay of the spittle, and smeared the eyes of the blind man with it; and then told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. He went, washed, and came back seeing. But he didn't come to the Saviour, because he had not seen Him, and didn't know who He was; but went home, or to some of his friends.

And they wondered much when they saw him with his eyes open. They could hardly believe he was the same man who anon had sat by the way-

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side, day by day for years, begging of the passers-by. How could a man, whose eyes were shrunk up in their sockets—who, in short, had no eyes at all to see—now have a pair of bright eyes that saw everything?

"It isn't he; never"—said a neighbour.

"If it isn't he," said another, "he is very much like him."

"Well, it is I, myself," said the man; "I was blind, but now I can see."

"Who then opened thine eyes, and how was it done?" asked the Jews.

"A man called Jesus put clay over my eyes, then told me to go and wash in the pool of Siloam; I went, I washed, and now I see."

"Where is He, now?"

"I don't know. I couldn't see Him, of course, when He spoke to me; and when I came back, He was gone."

And it was the Sabbath day.

Then they brought him to the Pharisees, who asked him how he had come to see. And he told them.

Then the Pharisees said: "That man"—meaning the Saviour—"is not of God, because He keepeth not the Sabbath day."

You remember, children, they said the same thing, when the Saviour healed the man with a withered hand, in the synagogue at Capernaum. And He asked them if they wouldn't take out of a ditch, an ox or an ass that had fallen into it, on a

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Sabbath day?—to show they only tried to find fault with Him because they hated Him.

Some of the Pharisees, however, said very truly: "How can a man that is a sinner, do such miracles?"

And they asked the man: "What thinkest thou of Him?" The man said: "He is a prophet."

Still the Jews wouldn't believe he was the poor blind beggar, they had seen for years begging at the gate, until they called his parents, and asked them if he was their son that was born blind, and sat there and begged.

They said he was: but how he came by his sight they couldn't tell. "Ask him," said they; "he is old enough to answer for himself."

So they asked him again, and said: "Give God the praise; we know that man is a sinner."

"Whether he be a sinner or no," said the man, "I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

But the Jews wouldn't let him alone; and asked him again how he had received his sight.

And he answered: "Why, I have told it you more than once, why will ye hear it again? Will you be His disciples?"

Then they reviled him. They said: "Thou art His disciple; but we, we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses; but as for this fellow, we don't know whence He is."

"Why," said the man, "herein is a marvellous thing; that you don't know whence He is, and yet

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He hath opened my eyes!"—"Why, if He were not of God, he could do nothing."

That is just, you remember, children, what Nicodemus said to the Saviour—that no one could do the miracles He did, if God were not with Him.

But the Pharisees were angry with the man, and said to him: "Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us"—us, rich and learned Pharisees? Be gone! And they turned him out.

But the Saviour heard they had turned him out of their company, so He met him, and asked him: "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?"

He answered and said: "Who is He, Lord, that I should believe in Him?"

And Jesus said unto him: "It is He that talketh with thee."

And he said: "Lord I believe. And he worshipped Him."

Then said the Saviour: "For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind."

Now, that is the sense of the miracle. But what does it mean?

First, then, what is the use of light, children?

— To make things clear: we can't see at night; only very little.

And what is the use of eyes?

— To see with.

Well, the Saviour said He is "the light of the

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world"—and that He came to make blind people see, and seeing people blind. How then, is He "the light of the world?"—What gives us light by day?

— The sun.

And can you remember where our Saviour is called "the Sun"—

— "The Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings."

Quite right. We saw that the other day. But then, how do you understand those words, Emma? Does the Saviour shine like the sun?

— No; it is to make us understand that when He came, He made everything clear to us. He told men He was the Saviour, and preached the Gospel to everybody.

Right. But the sun is not only bright, it is also—

— Warm. It warms us.

Then what do you understand by the "wings of the sun?"

— His rays.

And what by healing?

— It makes sick people feel well. Poor mother sits in her chair at the door, when the sun shines, and says it seems to go right through her, and stops her shivering.

I daresay. For there is an old saying that "where the sun can't come, the doctor does."

It is so with the sun in the sky; it is so also, children, with Him who is the Sun in God's

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heaven—with the Saviour, who came to make everything clear that was dark before; to save those that were lost, and to heal those that were sick.

Thus, "He brought to light"—that is, He made clear—"Life," that we shall not die, but only sleep, you know; and then awake on the morning of the Resurrection, to live for ever in Him and with Him. This is called "immortality"—a hard word for you children, although you find it in the New Testament, as at 1 *Cor.* xv. 53, 54; 2 *Tim.* i. 10, and elsewhere.

"Immortality" means "never dying." Because men shall all rise again from their graves, says the Saviour, who is to be the Judge of quick and dead; "those that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (*S. John*, v. 28, 29).

Now, all this was not made clear until the Saviour came. Before He came, a few prophets to whom God taught it, knew it would be so; but the rest of the people knew nothing about it. Those prophets, like David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others, were, S. Peter tells us, "like candles burning in a dark place" (2 *Pet.* i. 19), that gave light to them, and to very few besides.

If there were only three or four candles in the parish at night, would many people see by them?

— No; they'd all be in the dark; all but those that had the candles.

But when the sun rose, how would it be then?

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— They'd all see everything quite plain.

All ?

— Yes.

Think. Could that poor beggar—

— All except blind people.

Of course. But doesn't the sun shine on them the same as on other folks ?

— Yes, only they can't see it.

Is it the sun's fault, then ?

— No, their own.

Their own ? Do people blind themselves ? Was it that poor man's fault that he was born blind ?

— No; nobody's.

Oh yes ! somebody's. Whose fault was it, and whose fault is it, that there is blindness, sickness, and sin of all kinds, in the world ?

— The devil's.

Of course. If he had not brought sin into the world, there would have been no trouble, no sickness, and no death. People would have lived and known God as Adam did in Paradise, before he transgressed God's commandment, not to eat of the forbidden fruit. That was disobedience, which is also called "transgression" or "trespass," and that is sin; and for that, he was driven out of Paradise as a sinner, and as no longer a friend of God.

What is to transgress, children ? No answer ?

What, then, is to trespass ?

— Go where you oughtn't.

And "to transgress" means to step over a fence

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or boundary. Now, what do people in order to prevent others from trespassing?

— They plant hedges.

And what must he do who will trespass or transgress where he ought not?

— Make a hole.

— Make a gap.

— And be scratched.

Scratched—yes! And Bill Jervis will never lose the scar I see across his forehead, that reminds him of the scratch he got—

— When he trespassed into Farmer Wheatsheaf's orchard.

Now, what was best—to let alone a few sour apples that didn't belong to him, and not be punished for stealing them; or to trespass, disobey, steal, sin, get scratched and covered with blood, and keep the mark of it all life long; to tell people what he did, and how he came by that ugly scar across his forehead?

— Why, let alone trespassing.

Of course, that. And so he thinks, now, I daresay. Don't you, Billy?

— Yes.

God, however, children, did not plant a hedge around the tree whose fruit He told Adam and Eve not to eat, in order to keep them from it. What did He do, then?

— He told them not to go there.

— Not to eat of the fruit of it.

Exactly; and that was as if He had put a fence

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around it to keep people from it. But as there were only Adam and Eve in the garden, God thought it was enough to tell them not to go near it. So when they went to it, and took of the fruit, they stepped over God's commandment, and—

— Trespassed.

— Transgressed, and disobeyed God.

Yes; they made a gap through that hedge, and got awfully scratched. It left a mark on them, and on every one of us too. And that scar is the scar of sin. Before they trespassed, disobeyed God, and thus became sinners, they were pure and holy and good; they knew and understood everything, and talked with God as with a friend.

But when they disobeyed Him, all that came to an end. The light and glory of God departed from them, and their poor souls were now, so to speak, darkened, and "the eyes of their understanding" —as we saw the other day—were blinded.

And they, instead of being friends with God as before, were now estranged from Him who had created them, because they would hearken to the devil's advice to eat of the forbidden fruit, rather than obey God's order not to touch it.

Then Adam and Eve were driven from Paradise, as a punishment for their disobedience to God; and sin soon showed itself.

Cain was a liar and a murderer, and his children soon lost the knowledge of God, and went on their evil ways. They made themselves gods of wood and stone, and worshipped the sun, moon, and

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stars. The best among them tried to find their way back to God, but couldn't; because their understanding was darkened, and the eyes of their mind were blinded by reason of sin.

Something within them—their conscience—told them God was somewhere, only they could not of themselves find out, who or where He was. And so they made for themselves all manner of false gods, because they couldn't find the true one; but groped for Him, as it were, in the darkness of their mind, "if haply they might find Him" (*Acts*, xvii.).

But they didn't find Him out, until the Saviour came, who told them all: "I am the Saviour, come to make a way for you all back to God my Father and your Father. Come unto me all ye that travail, and are heavy laden with the burden of your sins, and I will give you rest."

This was good news to them. It was like light out of darkness; like the sun rising after a dark night. Therefore, when the Saviour went about preaching the Gospel in Galilee, to poor ignorant men, S. Matthew (iv. 15, 16) says it was in fulfilment of what the prophet Isaiah had said 700 years before: "The land of Zebulon, and the land of Nephtalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;

"The people which sat in darkness saw great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up,"—because those people never heard the Gospel, until the Saviour came to them.

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But they could not take it in, until He made them understand it, by plain speaking in parables.

Neither can we understand that "He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life," until He opens the eyes of our understanding by His grace in us, that gives us living and true faith in Him. Until then, we still continue born blind, like the poor beggar, who never would have seen the light of the sun, if the Saviour had not opened his eyes.

You then see, children, why He is called "the Sun," "the Light of the World," "that lighteth every man that cometh into the world"—because the glad tidings of salvation through Him, are like the light of the sun, unto all men alike.

But He is also said to be "the Sun of Righteousness"—what is that?

I explained to you about "righteousness" in the parable of the grain of mustard-seed, so that I will only just remind you of it now.

"Righteousness" means "being right" and "doing right." Thus a man who owes money is "right" when he pays it; until then, he was "wrong," or "in debt." But if he has no money to pay, what is to be done?

— Go to prison.

And would that pay the debt?

— No.

Well, then, what must the man do to whom the other owes the money?

— Wait.

Wait! for ever, then. If his debtor had nothing

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to pay out of prison, he wouldn't be likely to find much there.

— Some one must pay for him.

That's better. Now, Jack Stiles, suppose father owed a year's rent to his landlord, and had nothing to pay with, and the landlord threatened to put in the bailiffs, and sell all he has.

— Father wouldn't like it.

But suppose I said I would pay that year's rent sooner than see poor father, mother, and you children turned out of doors—would father still owe the money to his landlord?

— No.

Then he would no longer be "wrong" with him, but—

— Right.

But what made him "right"—his money or mine?

— Yours.

Then he would be "right" with his landlord through my money—through my kindness in paying his debt. In short, he would be "right"—"righteous" as regards his debt—of my "right" or "righteousness;" but not of his own.

So then he would be forgiven for my sake; and he would be free, because I had paid his debt.

So, also, as to the Saviour and ourselves, poor sinners. He paid for us the debt we owed God, and did for us what we could not do for ourselves.

And God forgives us our sins, and accounts us "right" or "righteous," not for anything of our

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own, but for what the Saviour did for us, in dying on the cross for our sins.

Therefore is He called "the Sun of Righteousness," because He came to tell all men on earth alike, that their sins will be forgiven them for His sake, and that they will be accounted righteous; but of His righteousness only.

But then it is also "with healing in His wings" —what does that mean? Emma Brakes, you said just now that poor mother, when she sits in the sun, feels better, and stops shivering.

Don't you think, then, that it heals the heart of a poor sinner, to hear that his sins are forgiven him for the Saviour's sake? It stops the shivering of fear, and heals the wounds made by the bite of the serpent. What is that?

— The serpent who tempted Eve?

Yes; the devil, who bit Adam and Eve, and poured venom into the bite, when he made them sin against God, and made us all sinners. But to hear that the Saviour suffered, in order that our sins should be forgiven us, heals that wound; because we then hear that God will not reckon our sins to us.

You see now, children, what this miracle meant— not only that the Saviour is the Light of the World, but that He must open the eyes of the understanding of us, who are born in sin, and blind as regards Him, in order that we may see Him "who is the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

One word more. Why did the Saviour send the

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man to wash in the pool of Siloam? What does "Siloam" mean?

— Sent.

And who was sent from Heaven to wash us clean from every stain, in the fountain of His precious Blood?

— Our Saviour.

Well, that man's washing in that pool meant that; and also, maybe, it was a figure of baptism, that I will explain to you when you are older.

And lastly, the Saviour said "He was come for judgment, that they that are blind might see, and that they that see might be made blind." What can this mean?

It means that the poor sinners who felt their own wickedness, and how God would punish them for it, were thankful to believe in Him, that He was the Son of God, the Saviour, for whose sake they would escape that punishment.

But the Pharisees thought themselves too learned and too good, to want such a Saviour as He: or, indeed, any Saviour at all. So they wouldn't believe in Him, but continued blind as regards Him, because they would not see Him as He was—the Son of God, the Saviour.

Some of them, then, asked Him, "Are we blind also?" And the Saviour answered them: "If ye were blind"—that is, if they thought themselves blind of heart and sinners—"ye should have no sin:" they would confess they were sinners, and would be forgiven.

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"But now ye say, we see"—we are wise, and learned, and better than the rest—"therefore, your sin remaineth"—you continue hardened, blind, and sinners as ever, with your sins not forgiven.

And it is the same now, children, as it was then. Many, very many think, as the Pharisees did, that they see well enough with their own common sense; that they are good enough, and want no Saviour.

That is why so many remain blind, for all that they think themselves wise; and why so few come to the Saviour, to have the eyes of their understanding opened, through faith in Him.

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XXII.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.

S. John, xi. 1 *to* 47.

SOME three months after—it was in January —Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, happened to be sick at Bethany, his own village.

Bethany, you know, children, was a pretty village in a "combe" of the Mount of Olives, some two miles from Jerusalem. That side of the hill is covered with olive-trees, pomegranates, apricot, and other fruit trees, whose fruit people of the village bring to the market at Jerusalem.

I once spent three weeks at Jerusalem, and went to Bethany every day; sometimes by the road, sometimes over the Mount of Olives, and sometimes across the country; as I thought I could not see too much of that lovely spot, nor tread too often the path our Saviour had trodden many a time, on His way from Jerusalem to His friends at Bethany.

Martha and Mary then sent word to the Saviour, who was, perhaps, at Nazareth, or somewhere else a long way from Bethany, that their brother, His friend Lazarus, was sick.

But when the Saviour heard that, He said, "this

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sickness is not unto death,"—although He knew Lazarus would die.

And then He did not come to him directly, but remained where He was two days, until Lazarus had died of his sickness, and then the Saviour said to his disciples: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." Did our Saviour ever speak like that before?—try and remember.

— He said: "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth."

Right. That was the Ruler's daughter (*S. Matt.* viii. 18-27). But what did the people of the house think of it?

— They laughed at our Saviour, and thought He knew no better; because they were sure the little girl was dead.

And what did the disciples say, when the Saviour told them Lazarus was asleep?

— "Lord, he shall do well;" because they thought our Saviour meant he was asleep, and not dead.

But then, why did our Saviour say Lazarus was only asleep, and that He must go and wake him up, when He knew he was dead?

What did I tell you death is, for those who truly believe in our Lord Jesus, that "He is the Resurrection and the Life?"

— It is a sleep between to-day and to-morrow.

What "to morrow?"

— The morning of the Resurrection.

Quite right, child. And that is what our Saviour

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meant to teach the people, when He raised the widow's son and the ruler's daughter; and also by raising Lazarus. But as this was only within three months of His own death and resurrection, He said and did more at the raising of Lazarus, than He did at the raising of the others.

Therefore did He now say plainly to the disciples, that Lazarus was dead; and that He was glad He was not there at the time, so that He should raise him from the grave, and the disciples might believe in Him and in the Resurrection.

The Saviour then came to Bethany, and found that "Lazarus had lain in the grave four days already." Because, in that hot country, they don't keep the dead as we do, sometimes for a week; but they bury them directly they are dead.

Then Martha, when she heard the Saviour was coming, went forth to meet Him, and said to Him: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

Jesus said unto her: "Thy brother shall rise again."

Martha then answered that she knew he would rise again in the resurrection, at the last day.

Now, children, mark what followed, and lay deep in your little hearts our Saviour's answer to Martha:

"I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

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"And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die. Believest thou this?

"She saith unto Him: Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Then she went to call her sister Mary, who came to the Saviour, and also said to Him, weeping, that if He had been there, her brother had not died. Perhaps she, too, wondered He had not come to them when they sent for Him; because He loved them all very much.

When He saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come to comfort them, also weeping, He wept also.

What made the Saviour weep, children?

— Because He was sorry?

Of course that. He wept because He felt with them. Do you remember what I said, when explaining to you the miracle of raising the widow's son, how none of us can feel with another? Because another's sorrow does not touch our heart, the same as it does his. How can it? If you burn your finger, I am sorry for you, but I don't feel the burn; because you and I are not one.

But our Saviour is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," because He was tempted and tried as we are, in every way (*Heb.* iv. 15); and as He is God as well as man, He makes Himself one with us; and suffers, or rejoices with us, the same as we do.

He too wept, therefore; not only because His

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friends were weeping for their brother, but also because, perhaps, He was sorry to bring back the soul of Lazarus from Paradise, where it was happy —to this earth, where it would have a few more years of trouble and sorrow.

So He came to the grave. It was a cave, hewn out in the rock, and a stone lay upon it. "Take away that stone!" said the Saviour.

"Lord," said Martha to Him, "by this time He stinketh, for he hath been dead four days."—Why uncover the grave?

"Said I not to thee," replied the Saviour, "that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

Then the Saviour lifted up His eyes to Heaven, prayed to His Father, and then cried with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth!"

"And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face bound about with a napkin." And the Saviour said to them: "Loose him, and let him go."

Then many of those who saw this miracle believed in the Lord; but some also went, and told it to the Pharisees, who took counsel together how they could put Him to death.

This miracle, children, teaches us what the Saviour wished to show to those who saw it;—that He has power over death, and corruption. For Lazarus was fast decaying in the grave, when He called him out of it.

And as the dead heard the voice of the Lord

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saying to him, "Lazarus, come forth!"—so also does He, who is to be Judge of quick and dead, say, "that the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice:

"And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (*S. John*, v. 25-30).

They shall all rise from the dust of the earth from which they were taken—"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 *Cor.* xv. 52).

It is very marvellous, children, when you come to think of it, that those who have been dead so long, and whose dust is mingled with the earth, should rise again out of that dust.

And yet the Saviour tells us not to marvel at it, because it is His doing; and He can do all things, because He is God. And to show He can do it, He raised the dead in presence of the people; and came Himself out of His grave on the third day.

Well, but does He not teach us, by things we see every day, that we shall die, and rise again?—Think.

You see that flower in the pot on the window—How did it come to grow and to blossom?

— Sowed it.

And then?—The seed of it was a tiny little thing you could hardly see—you put it into the

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earth—and when there, you couldn't find it again. And if you could find it, it wouldn't be as it was when you put it in; but all gone, pretty near.

But, by-and-by, you saw a small green thing peering above ground; then waited, and waited, until at last you had the flower you longed for.

Now the seed of that flower melted away in the earth, as our bodies do also; but by God's power and wisdom, the flower grew out of it; as our bodies also shall rise from the earth with which they are mixed up, after we are dead.

And this is what the Saviour said soon after He had raised Lazarus: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (*S. John*, xii. 24).

You see—in order to get an ear, and sometimes several ears, of corn, we must put the grain into the earth, where it dies—it falls abroad and melts away.—But out of it comes the plant of wheat, oats, or barley, according to the seed put in; that yields a great deal more than what was put in at first.

The Saviour said that about Himself and us too.

As regards Himself, children, you see that if He had not died, to bear the chastisement of our sins; if He had not been buried because He was dead; and if He had not broken asunder the grave and had not risen again, we shouldn't have been saved by Him; we should remain dead for ever, and we should have no hope of everlasting life after death.

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But through His death and resurrection, He won all those good things for us; and saved the whole world by it.

And as regards ourselves, which is best, children, the small, dull-looking seed you put into the ground, or the lovely flower that grows out of it?

— Why, the flower.

So also with our body, when it rises again from the earth. It will be as much better than the one in which we are now, as that beautiful flower is better than the small seed out of which it grew. But if we didn't die and rise again, it wouldn't be like that. Just as, if the seed was not put into the earth, it wouldn't yield a beautiful flower, like the one you see there.

But there are other things whereby God teaches us that we are to die, and then to rise again another day.

How is it in winter, children?

— All cold, and snow, and frost.

And how is the ground?

— Hard, and frozen; and nothing grows.

And after the winter?

— Spring.

And why is it called "Spring?"

— Because——

Because everything "springs forth" into life again. In winter our hedge-banks are dead, so to speak; but as soon as the sun of spring begins to shine and feel warm, they are covered with primroses, violets, blue-bells, and other lovely

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flowers, and green grass. Those flowers were in the earth, but couldn't come out until the sun brought them out.

You see, it is like rising again from the grave. And so it will be, when the Saviour, who is also the Sun of Righteousness, comes on the clouds of heaven, and calls men out of their graves on the day of the Resurrection.

And in spring, what do you see come out, besides flowers—and fly about?

— Butterflies.

— Yellow ones, and white and red.

— And brown ones.

Well, where do you think those pretty butterflies come from?

— Don't know.

— Caterpillars.

Yes. All those butterflies you see fly about, and sip the honey of flowers, were, not long before, caterpillars that fed on leaves, and crawled about. Now, when a caterpillar has crawled about and eaten enough, it either buries itself in the earth, or it spins for itself a round house of silk; or else, it ties itself to a twig or to a branch, around the body, with two or three threads it spins. And then, in a few days, the caterpillar is gone; and is changed into something that looks like a coffin, called a "chrysalis," because sometimes there are spots on it that look like gold or silver.

Then in a few weeks in summer, or in a few months through the winter, out of that coffin-like

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thing, comes a beautiful butterfly. It is not the caterpillar, and yet it is the caterpillar, that was thus changed from a crawling grub, to a beautiful butterfly that basks in the sunshine; that flies instead of crawling; and that sips honey, instead of feeding on coarse leaves or grass.

There, children, you see, how God teaches us by things we see every day; if only we will heed His teaching. He works in our sight, life, death, and the resurrection, through the flowers and the butterflies we love to see; and yet few people care to understand what it means.

But everybody can understand, if only they will believe, what He, who is the Resurrection and the Life, said to Martha:

"Whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?"

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XXIII.

HEALING THE WOMAN WHO HAD A SPIRIT OF INFIRMITY.

S. Luke, xiii. 11, *to the end of* v. 17.

LITTLE more than one month before our Saviour's death upon the cross, He happened to be teaching on the Sabbath day, in one of the synagogues.

And there was there a woman who was infirm—that is, weak and sickly—and who, for eighteen long years, had been bowed down, and could in no wise lift up herself, and walk upright like the rest.

You sometimes see old people like that. There's old Dolly Barker in the village, children. You see her go about almost bent double, tottering along with a stick, on which she leans with both hands. And some of you, little women, stop, and look at her, when she goes by, and wonder if you will ever be like that. Perhaps you may.

The Saviour, then, saw that poor woman, and pitied her; and as He knew she would be glad enough to be made straight, He laid His hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

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Only think how thankful the poor soul must have been, to be able to walk all right, like other people!

But the ruler of the synagogue was angry with the Saviour, for healing on the Sabbath day; and told the people to come and be healed on week days, and not on the Sabbath day.

Now, was he right, or wrong?

— Wrong; because it is no harm to heal people on Sundays. It is a good work.

And the Saviour called him a hypocrite; and so he was. But why?

— Because he knew better.

That's near the mark, Willie, my boy. Of course he knew better; and the Saviour showed it him, at once.

He asked him, if he didn't take his ox or his ass away to watering on Sabbath days. If so, then, was it not far better to loosen this poor woman, and daughter of Abraham, from the bonds of Satan, who had kept her thus bent double eighteen years?

But they couldn't answer Him a word; because they felt in their conscience that He was right, and that they had tried to find fault with Him because they hated Him; and because they wished the poor people to think them very good and holy, for being so particular about the Sabbath.

But you remember, children, that once before, when the Pharisees found fault with the disciples, for plucking ears of corn and eating them, on the

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Sabbath day, the Saviour showed those Pharisees that His disciples were not breaking the Sabbath; for that "the Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (*S. Mark*, ii. 27).

That is, children, that the Saviour, "who is Lord also of the Sabbath," knows our wants and weaknesses, and does not wish to make His day burdensome to us. His day is a day of rest from our weekly work; and a feast day, to be spent, not as if it were one of our own days of the week, but as a feast day that belongs to Him.

A Sunday well kept, children, always begins a good week. Because if we keep the Lord's day for His sake, and take pleasure in it, He will bless the six days He gives us to do our work. But if we work without His blessing, we work to little purpose. And money earned on Sundays, is put into a purse with holes in it. The money drops out, somehow or other.

We saw, children, what our Saviour's healing of the deaf and dumb, blind, and lame people meant. But what about this miracle?

How was that poor woman?

— She was bent double.

— And couldn't right herself.

If she was thus bent double, what did she look at mostly?

— Why, the ground.

Of course. Her eyes were mostly turned downwards to the earth; she might look forward, perhaps, but she couldn't look upwards to heaven.

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But when cured by the Saviour, she then did look up to heaven, to thank God for having been made straight and able to walk upright.

Now, do tell me, what do most people you see and hear, talk about, chiefly ?

— Why, the harvest.

Not all the year round, surely ? Think again.

— Going to market ?

What do they go to market for ?

— To buy and sell things.

What for ?

— To get money.

— It's money they talk most about.

So it is. Money, and the things money gives, are what most men think and talk about. But then, is it for this world, or for the world to come, they try to get all the money they can ?

— For this world.

Yes; and yet we are told not to set our heart on things of this earth—that is, not to love money and other things too much, because they come and go, and last no time. But the holy Apostle tells us to "set our affection on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God," because those things are eternal; they never will pass away (*Col.* iii. 1).

And our Saviour warns us in the parable of the Rich fool (*S. Luke*, xii. 13-22) not to be covetous: "for what will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and yet lose his own soul ?" (*S. Mark*, viii. 36), or "what will a man give in exchange for his soul ?"

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Not all the money in the world could buy the soul of one man, or buy the kingdom of heaven for it; because, all money shall perish, but the soul never will. It is a living soul God Almighty breathed into man. And one can't buy heaven and everlasting life, with that which is to-day, and is gone to-morrow.

Why, then, children, do you think God has put us in this world? To toil and worry ourselves to make money we must leave behind, when we die, or to make provision for the world to come?

To build houses here on earth, in which others will live, or to prepare for ourselves "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," "in the city, the builder and maker of which is God" (2 *Cor.* v. 1; *Heb.* xi. 10)—the Heavenly Jerusalem? (*Rev.* xxi.)

— Why, that house in the Heavenly Jerusalem. Of course. But men, in general, don't think so. They think of nothing but this world, and how to enjoy it most; and never give a thought to what is to become of them when they die. They set their heart on this world; they love it, and talk of it, and live for it, as if they were to be in it for ever.

So when death comes, they are taken unawares, because they would not think of it beforehand, and make ready for it. They hardly ever give a thought to God, to their soul, and to heaven. But like that poor woman bent double eighteen years, their eyes are down upon the earth, all their lifetime.

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And they can't, and won't take them off the ground, because they are so bent towards the earth, that they can't raise themselves up, and give a look to Heaven.

But why? And who, do you think, children, is he that keeps them like that, bent double with their face and eyes to the ground, morning and evening, day and night, for months and years, or, perhaps, their whole life-time? Who was it that had thus bound that poor woman?

— Satan.

And he is said to be "the Prince of this world" (*S. John*, xii. 41), who said to the Saviour it belongs to him (*S. Matt.* iv. 9), but for the present, only. Because he makes men do his will; he makes them wicked, covetous, liars, swearers, and all that is bad; so that they may not reach the kingdom of heaven, but be with him in hell.

It is he who tells them to love money most, because "it is the root of all evil" (1 *Tim.* vi. 10), and to love God least, because He is the source of all good; and because "the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death" (*Prov.* xiv. 27).

It is Satan who leads men, as it were, by the nose, just as you see bulls led with a ring in their nostrils. He has "taken them captive at his will" (2 *Tim.* ii. 26); they are his prisoners, whom he leads about as he pleases.

Some he teaches to rob, to murder, to do all manner of disgraceful things.

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But as most men would not disgrace themselves in the eyes of others by robbing, stealing, killing, and such like, he sets them to worship their idol Mammon; that is, riches and money. As they all worship it, bowing to the ground before it, and shouting, "Great is Mammon! worship him, O ye people," nobody is ashamed of it, because almost all do it.

Not all, however. Those whose heart is touched by God's grace, no longer bow down bent double to the earth, as if grubbing for money, and thinking of nothing else.

But now, like the poor woman cured by the Saviour, they stand and walk upright, and look, no longer all day and night to the earth, but now they also look up to heaven. They mind what the Saviour tells them: "To seek first of all the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (*S. Matt.* vi. 33), and other things—after that.

So they no longer make money their god, to try and get it, if by fair means, well; if not, by foul—to get it, in short, anyhow. But now they try and make friends of it, as our Saviour says, by doing good to others with their money, and spending it for God's sake, and no longer hoarding it up, to worship it in heaps.

While they toddled along bent double to the earth, they clenched their fist so tight that they wouldn't give away a farthing, or a morsel of bread to the poor. "The poor have enough already," they would say.

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If they were asked to give to a church or to a school, or to some charity or other, "they couldn't afford any of it, and wouldn't give." They didn't mind losing money, because it is in the way of business; but "give," as our Saviour tells us to do, they would not. Their heart was like the gate of a prison; because nothing hardens and shuts up the heart, like the love of money.

But now it is quite different. They worship God and love Him instead of Mammon. They are "diligent in business," early and late at their office; but also "fervent in spirit," active and thinking of more things than money—"serving the Lord"—making the best use they can of what God lends them during their lifetime; because they know they are only stewards of God's gifts to them, and that, therefore, they shall have to give account to Him of it all.

Such men prosper in the earth according to God's promise. They now walk straight and upright, and have better understanding. They see that wisdom and kindness, learning and temperance, faith, hope, and charity, and many other things, are worth more than wealth.

And also, that no bank on earth gives such good interest for money as the Bank of Heaven.

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XXIV.

CLEANSING THE TEN LEPERS.

S. Luke, xvii. 11, *to* 19.

WITHIN a fortnight or so of our Saviour's passion—that is, sufferings—He was coming from Galilee to Jerusalem, through Samaria.

And as He went into a certain village, ten men, who were lepers, met Him, and, standing afar off, cried: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

Then the Saviour said to them: "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

When they saw they were clean, one, who was a Samaritan, came back to the Saviour to thank Him; but the others went on, and never thanked Him at all.

Our Saviour wondered and said: "Were not the ten cleansed? But where are the others? Only this one, he too, a Samaritan, has returned thanks to God."

And He said to him: "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole."

I have already told you, children, that leprosy, a loathsome disease that covers the body in white

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patches, and eats it up, was a figure of sin, and of how sin destroys the soul of man.

There is, and there was, no cure for leprosy; and lepers live by themselves apart from the rest of mankind, who will have nothing to do with them; not only because they are so loathsome, but also because leprosy is catching, and when once caught, it runs in the family from that day forth.

But God in His mercy gave, as you know, power to the priest under the Law, to cleanse lepers of their leprosy; whereby He meant to make men understand, that—as leprosy was cleansed only by the priest, so also no other than our own High Priest, Jesus, could and would "cleanse us from all sin" (1 *John*, i. 7-10).

Therefore did the Saviour order those lepers to go and show themselves to the priests; as He did, you remember, tell the leper who met Him coming down the mountain (*S. Matt.* viii. 1), to go and show himself to the priest, and to offer the gift ordered in the law of Moses. In order to show that "He was not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them" (*S. Matt.* v. 17).

Yet, at the same time, He cleansed the lepers, by His will and almighty power, while they were on their way to the priest. Thereby showing to them, that He was the Son of God, come into the world to cleanse us from sin; for those lepers found themselves cleansed without having seen the priests, to whom they were going to show themselves.

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You understand, children, the meaning of this miracle, which is the same as that of cleansing that other leper, which I have already explained to you.

But how was it that only one of the ten should return to thank the Saviour; and he, too, "a stranger," as the Saviour called him?

Since this one was "a stranger," and a Samaritan, with whom, you know, Jews would have had no dealings (*S. John*, iv. 9), only that, as all lepers were loathsome, Jews as well as Samaritans, they herded together—the nine others were Jews, very likely.

The whole ten cried together: "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" because, no doubt, they had heard of His cleansing other lepers; and they would cry for help from Him, or anyone else.

But the nine, who were Jews, and children of Abraham, looked upon the Saviour only as a prophet, who wrought miracles as Elijah and Elisha had done; and thought they had right to be cleansed, according to the law of Moses.

But the stranger, the Samaritan, like the woman of Canaan, thought nothing of the sort. He knew he was a Gentile, "a lost sheep of the house of Israel." But he, like that woman, had faith in Christ, as the Saviour promised to Abraham, who would save Gentiles as well as Jews.

So that, when he found himself cleansed, not only was he thankful for being clean, but also that when he cried, "Jesus, Master," he did so in faith

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in Him, who had just shown him He would cleanse and save him, as well as He would Jews.

The Saviour then cleansed the nine Jews, in order to show He was, and is, our Great High Priest, whose "blood cleanseth us from all sin." But He cleansed the Samaritan, as a reward for his faith in Him. Therefore did He say to him: "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole." And therefore, also, was "the stranger" more grateful than the children of the family.

When you sit down to breakfast or to dinner, children, I am afraid you don't always thank father or mother for getting it ready for you; because you think you have a certain right to it all, as father's and mother's children. And so you have.

Yet ought you to be always grateful, first to God, for your "daily bread;" and then to father, who toils for it, and to mother who gets it ready.

But if a poor beggar came to your door while you were at breakfast, and you told him to sit down by you, and have a cup of bread and milk with you, methinks he would thank you, more than you ever thanked father or mother for your own bread and milk. What do you think?

— One came the other day, and mother gave him some of her own breakfast; because there wasn't any left besides.

And what did the poor beggar say, Lucy?

— He thanked her very much; and said she was

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a kind woman, whom God would bless;—because he was so hungry.

And God will bless her; as He has done already; for her children are good, obedient, and always tidy. But you see, that poor stranger thought more of a bit of breakfast given him, than did the children of the family; because they have it every day; and he, seldom, or never.

So with that stranger Samaritan. He thanked God for having sent His Son into the world to save him, a poor Samaritan. But the Jews said: "We have Abraham to our father."

But as the Saviour said to them: "If they were Abraham's children, they would do the works of Abraham. For Abraham believed in Him, the Saviour, whose day he saw, and rejoiced" (*S. John*, viii. 39, 56). But they cast Him out, and crucified Him.

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XXV.

BLIND BARTIMÆUS.

S. Mark, x. 46, *to the end.*

ABOUT a week before the last Passover our Saviour ate with His disciples, He happened to be passing through Jericho.

What about Jericho, children? Do you remember anything?

— The walls fell down.

— 'Twas the first city Joshua took after crossing Jordan.

And how did he take it?

— They went round it once a day for seven days, and seven times on the seventh. Then they shouted, and the walls fell down, and the soldiers went and took everything, and killed the people in it.

And Joshua cursed the city, saying: "Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city of Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it" (*Josh.* vi. 26).

And so it remained—a heap of ruins—for more

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than five hundred years. But in the days of wicked King Ahab, a man called Hiel, of Beth-el, where Jeroboam had set up a golden calf for the people to worship, instead of God—thought Joshua's curse had died out, after so many years. He then began to rebuild Jericho.

But Joshua's curse only slept, and was not dead.

For Hiel "laid the foundation thereof in Abiram, his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub; according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun" (1 *Kings*, xvi. 34).

But Jericho continued to be inhabited by bad people. In the days of our Saviour the road that led to it from Jerusalem was not safe, by reason of robbers. And even now, no one would travel that way alone, unless he wished to fare like the poor wounded man in the parable; only without a good Samaritan to take care of him.

But, as our Saviour had gone to the Gadarenes, to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, through the Decapolis and other out-of-the-way places, to do good there, so also did He visit the wicked town of Jericho; to see if He could bring some blessing to the people there.

And so He did. For as He was going out of Jericho, and nigh unto it, a poor blind man called Bartimæus, who was sitting by the wayside, begging, heard a crowd of people coming, and the sound of many voices, and asked what it was.

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They said: "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by."

Then he began to cry out: "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

But they told him to be quiet; that it was not for him, a beggar, to make so much noise, and cry to the Prophet.

But the more they told him to keep quiet, the more he cried out: "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

The poor man—it was his only chance. He had been leading a most weary life; blind and begging every day outside the gates of an accursed city, without any hope of ever seeing the light of heaven, and living on broken victuals, and on the small pittance given him by the passers-by.

But even he, in that out-of-the-way, forlorn place, had heard of the Saviour, promised not only to Abraham, but also to David. And he knew that if he could only make himself heard, Jesus of Nazareth, the gracious Son of David, the merciful Saviour and Shepherd of lost sheep like him—would have pity on him.

So he cried out, until the Saviour heard him, and standing by, commanded them to call him. And they called to him, saying: "Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee."

And blind Bartimæus, throwing aside his cloak, in order to grope his way all the quicker, came to the Saviour, who asked him: "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

Didn't the Saviour know what he wanted, that

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He should have asked him that question? Why then did He ask it?

— To make him say?

But why should he be made to say?

It was in order to make him see that he would be rewarded at once for his faith in the Saviour.

He had cried to Him, as to the Son of David, the Saviour of the world, to do for him what nobody else could do—to make him see. Because He, being God as well as man, could work that miracle, if He chose. That was the faith Bartimæus had in Him; and he received his sight, as a reward for it.

But what use did he make of his eyes? Did he go back to his corner by the wayside, to sit there and beg, as before?

— No; he followed Jesus by the way.

And this miracle, children, teaches us that the kind Saviour, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, always answers the prayers of those who pray to Him in faith, as Bartimæus and other blind men, lepers, deaf and dumb, lame and maimed—prayed Him to heal them.

How do you think blind Bartimæus felt, when he heard Jesus of Nazareth was passing by? Was he, or was he not, in earnest when he cried, "Son of David, have mercy on me"?

— He was in earnest.

How do you know?

— Because he cried out, and wouldn't hold his peace.

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Just so. He wished to be heard, because he wanted very much to be made to see; and he knew no one could open his eyes, but the Saviour. You see, it was his strong faith in the Saviour, and his great wish to receive his sight, that made him cry out, until he was heard. If he had sat still, and said nothing, it would have shown, what?—That he wished to have his eyes opened?

— No; that he didn't care about it.

And that he didn't believe—

— In the Saviour, that He would do it for him.

And so, he would have remained as he was, blind and—

— A poor beggar.

Well, to show that the Saviour is the same now as He was then, He says to us: "If ye shall ask anything, in My name, I will do it" (*S. John*, xiv. 14); "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (xvi. 24).

How do you understand that?

Does it mean, think ye, that we are to pray for anything we may want, and get it at once? Do you think, for instance, that if you prayed God to make you rich,—or if poor lame Joe Stiles, or blind Molly Sprakes, prayed to be able to run about, or to see, God would grant it?

— No.

Of course not; but why—since He says, "if ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it"?

The Saviour says we are "to ask in His name;"

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what does that mean? What is to ask in another's name?

— For his sake?

Something like it. "In his name"—that is—to make use of his name, with him of whom we ask anything.

Suppose, Emma Little, you wished to speak to Squire Broadacres, and to ask him to give poor father work during the winter, how would you set about it?

Perhaps you would be afraid to go to Woodlands, and ring the bell, and ask to speak to the squire. And although he is kind-hearted, and wouldn't turn away a poor little woman like you, yet the footman might; he might slam the door in your face, saying the squire doesn't want beggars there—and you had better go.

And you would come away, your little heart very much hurt; not knowing what to do to get at the squire, and tell him about father. And you came home and told father you didn't know what to do.

Then father said: "Why don't you ask to speak to the young squire, who teaches in the Sunday School? He'll be sure to hear what you have to say."

So on Sunday, when school was over, you went up to him, you curtsied, and asked to speak to him about father.

Then he said to you: "My father is away from home just now, but will be back in a couple of days; and I also shall be from home a while.

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But go to Woodlands towards the end of the week, ring the bell, and make use of my name. Tell the servant I told you to call, and ask him to show you in to my father. He will hear what you have to say, and will do what he can."

You went; you rang, and told the servant his young master had told you to call, and to speak to the squire. Then you were let in, for the young squire's sake, whose name you made use of; and you were shown into the squire's room.

He asked your errand; you told him the young squire, his son, had told you to speak to him about father; and the squire promised you he would see to it; and give father work.

And you came away happy. The footman wouldn't dare slam the door in your face this time; because his young master told you to come in, and his old master told him to give you some food, and to open the door for you to come away.

And you got all this "in the young squire's name." Had you come in your own name of Emma Little, very likely you wouldn't have gone beyond the door-step. But the squire's son told you to make use of his name; you did so, and his name opened for you the door of the house, brought you to the squire, got you what you wanted, gave you food besides, and brought you away happy.

But if, instead of asking Squire Broadacres to give father some work—a very right and proper thing to do, poor mother being so ill, too,—you had

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asked him to give you one of his farms—would he have done it?

— A farm? No, he wouldn't.

Of course not, because it would have been a foolish thing for you to ask, and for him to give you.

Instead of listening to you, as he did about father, he would have rung the bell, and told the footman to send you home with somebody, as you were not in your right mind. But when you asked him a proper thing, and said, of course, "If you please, if it be your will, and you be so kind," he gave it you directly, because it was a proper request on your part, and he was pleased to do it.

Now, children, you will understand what the Saviour means when He tells you to pray to God "in His name." If we prayed, and asked God for what we want in our own name, He wouldn't hear us, poor sinners as we are. But if we ask in the name of Him, whom He sent to seek and to save us, His Beloved Son, for whose sake He loves us, then He will hear and answer us, and give us what?—everything?—what we will, or what He wills?

—What He wills.

And what is His will as regards us, His children? Our good or our hurt?

— Our good.

Yes; our sanctification (1 *Thess.* iv. 3), that is, that we should be made good, and better, and be made fit for His kingdom in heaven. And He is so kind, that He says: "All things shall work to-

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gether for good to them that love Him, to them who are the called"—as we are—"according to His purpose" (*Rom.* viii. 28).

But who knows best, what is good for us—He or we?

— He.

Because He is all-wise. And do you know what will happen to you to-day, to-morrow, or any time after? Do you know when you shall die?

— No, nothing.

But He does, everything. Who, then, is to order everything concerning us and our life on earth—He or we?

— He, of course.

And so He does, if we let Him. But if we will go our own way, He lets us do so, and we find the difference.

If, however, we ask him to lead us by His Providence, He does it in a way we know not, but which He knows; and that is enough for us. And when we allow ourselves thus to be led by Him, then, as the Holy Apostle tells us, "We have this confidence in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us" (1 *John*, v. 14). Therefore did our Saviour teach us to say: "Not my will, but Thine be done" (*S. Luke*, xxii. 42).

Let us now return to Bartimæus.

You see he got what he wanted because he asked for it in earnest, and because it was right and proper, and according to God's will, that the Saviour should work that miracle on him, for the

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sake of those who saw it done, and for the man's own sake too.

But what use did Bartimæus make of his sight?

— He followed Jesus by the way.

Mark that, children. He followed the Saviour. Now, what is "to follow?"

— To go after some one.

And who leads the way? He who walks in front, or he who walks behind?

— He who walks in front.

Then Bartimæus, when he could see, went, not his own way, but after the Saviour, and where the Saviour led him.

So with those to whom He gives sight by opening the eyes of their understanding, and giving them faith in Him, as their Saviour. They now no longer go their own way, groping about in the dark, and not knowing whither they be going all the time.

But they follow Him; they follow the leadings of His good Spirit, and they copy the example He has set them, that they should "follow His steps" (1 *Pet.* ii. 21). For His servants "ought so to walk even as He walked" (1 *John*, ii. 6).

And you, children, are His servants. He has opened the eyes of your understanding to believe in Him, the Son of God, your Saviour, and He walks before you to the kingdom whither He calls you.

Follow Him thither, He shows you the way.

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XXVI.

THE WITHERING OF THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

S. Matt. xxi. 8, *to* 20.

THREE days before our Saviour was crucified, He went over the Mount of Olives to Bethany, where He often lodged with His friends Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus.

But they, like Him, were poor, so that He left their homestead early on the Wednesday morning, without having broken His fast; and He was hungry.

He then saw a fig-tree afar off covered with leaves, and He went to it to see if there were any figs on it. It was early in April, so that the figs couldn't have been ripe, for they only ripen in July and August. But there ought to have been young figs on the tree, if it was a good tree. If there were only leaves on it at that time of the year, then the fig-tree was a bad one.

Therefore did the Saviour curse the tree, saying: "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig-tree withered away."

It was cursed, and therefore it withered, not

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because the figs on it were not ripe, for they could not have been ripe at that season, but because it had no fruit.

It was covered with such beautiful green leaves as to be seen from a distance. But leaves alone could not save it. People in that country don't plant fig-trees for the leaves, or for the wood thereof, but for the fruit, which is delicious when ripe.

But the disciples marvelled to see the fig-tree so soon withered away.

Then the Saviour said to them, "Have faith in God; If ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig-tree, but also, if ye shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done.

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

To whom did the Saviour say this, children?

— To His disciples.

Who were also ap——

— Apostles.

That is, messengers, whom He sometimes sent before Him to any place He was coming to, to prepare the way for Him; and to whom He gave power to heal the sick, to cure the lame, and the blind, to raise the dead, and to work other miracles, as we read they did.

But why were they to work miracles?

— To let people see them?

But why? What did Nicodemus say to the Saviour?

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— That no one could do the miracles He did, if God was not with him.

Well, and the Saviour gave His Apostles power to work miracles, in order that the heathen to whom they would preach the Gospel, should see that God was with them, and believe the Gospel they preached.

And as they would have to suffer a great deal from the heathen and others, among whom they went preaching, they would require very strong faith and trust in God, to work miracles in His name. So the Saviour told them not to doubt, but always, and at all times, to pray to Him for all they wanted. For that He would always be with them.

But do people, clergymen and others, now work miracles, as the Apostles did?

— No.

No; miracles are no longer needed, because the Gospel has taken root in the earth, and grows of its own accord, gradually and slowly; but as oaks do, children, firm and strong.

The good seed sown by the Apostles can never die, for it was the Gospel, the glad tidings of salvation through Christ, the word of God, that can never return to Him, says the prophet, without having wrought His will, "and prospered in that thing whereunto He sent it" (*Is.* lv. 11).

You remember the parable of the grain of mustard-seed. It is a very small seed that grows into a great tree, in the branches of which birds take

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shelter. So also is the Gospel of Christ. At first it was a small seed, only twelve Apostles to sow it over the world. But now it spreads its branches far and wide, and birds—the nations of the earth far away, come and take shelter under the leaves thereof, that are "for the healing of the nations" (*Rev.* xxii. 2).

So that now, no miracles are needed to accompany the preaching of the Gospel, as in the days of the Apostles. But those who pretend to work miracles are all impostors; men and women who impose upon others by their tricks; and people are silly who believe them.

But now, what is the meaning of this miracle of the fig-tree?

You remember, children, the parable of the fig-tree in the vineyard (*S. Luke*, xiii. 6, 7).

How, for three years, the lord of the vineyard came to find fruit on it, and as he didn't find any, he told the dresser of the vineyard to root it up, and not let it cumber the ground any longer. But the dresser of the vineyard begged to let it stay another year; he would try what he could do for the tree, and, if after that it gave no fruit, then he would cut it down.

And I explained to you that that fig-tree represented the people of the Jews, to whom our Saviour came, to see if they would believe in Him during the three years He went in and out among them. But they would not; they put Him to death, and God, soon after, sent the armies of the Romans,

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who destroyed their city, and scattered them abroad.

But the meaning of that parable as regards ourselves is, that God often comes to us through sickness or otherwise during our life, to see what good fruit we bear, what good works we do that He likes. And that many a time, but for the Saviour praying Him to bear with us a little longer, God would root us up, take away our breath, because we bear no fruit to please Him.

Well, children, this miracle of the withering of the fig-tree, has very much the same meaning as that parable.

This fig-tree also represented the nation of the Jews.

They had every blessing a nation could have. God had chosen them, and had given them a land flowing with milk and honey, the glory of all lands. He had given them His laws; He had built His temple in Jerusalem, which He called His own city, "the City of the Great King."

He had sent them prophets to warn and to teach them; He had forgiven them their many sins and idolatries, and had even brought them back from their captivity at Babylon. And at last He sent them His own Son, whom they would put to death, in another three days.

That Son was now coming for the last time to see if haply there was any fruit, even though it were unripe, under the bright green leaves of God's great blessings to the nation. But He found none

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—nay, they were about to shout: "Crucify Him! crucify Him! His blood be on us, and on our children.

So it was, and so it is yet. That was the end of the nation of the Jews. No more fruit from it for ever! And it withered at once—in their unbelief, and by reason of it.

But the fruit the Jews will ever yield again, will be when they turn to Christ as to their Saviour, the sweet fruit of faith in Him. Then there will be one fold and one Shepherd; when they, also, "look on Him whom they pierced" on the cross, and hail Him as the Messiah, the Christ of God.

But this miracle, children, also concerns us a little.

Do you never hear of people dying suddenly, or after an accident or an illness of a few hours? The thought of dying suddenly is so awful, that in church we pray to be preserved from it.

Yet we see it often happen. You all knew Jem Springer, and what a desperate character he was. Always poaching, or drunk, or on some wicked errand or other. It was not from want of being talked to, but nothing, neither kindness nor warning, had any effect on him.

You remember his death. He fell from a high rick on which he was, half-drunk; he groaned aloud, struggled a little, and never spoke. He was dead.

But you children, are, like that fig-tree, covered with green leaves. You are well taught, you be-

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lieve in the Saviour; you were baptized into His Church, and you have many blessings which Chinese or Hindoo children have not.

But leaves alone didn't save the fig-tree from withering.

See, then, that you bear good fruit, to show you are Christian children. Fruits of gentleness, obedience, fear of God, kindness and goodness, which God loves to see, even when they are not quite ripe and sweet. Because He will make them ripen as you grow older, in the sunshine of His love.

Then when the Saviour comes to see, and finds there are young figs under the bright green leaves, He will say: Let be, they will be ripe another day. My Father's blessing rests upon His child.

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XXVII.

OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION.

S. John, xx.

I COULD not explain to you some of our Lord's miracles, children, without saying to you something about His own Resurrection; because it was done through the same power that wrought His other miracles.

He worked miracles because "God was with Him," because He was and is, God and man. Therefore is He called in the Gospel "Son of God" and "Son of man."

But although He worked those miracles, which were miracles only to those who saw them, but not to Him, because He is God, and can do what He will, yet did He suffer in His body, that was the same as our own; of flesh and bones, with a soul and spirit.

He took upon Himself our own human nature, in order to make Himself one of us, and like us in all things, except one—sin.

We are sinners; born in sin (*Ps.* li. 5); our flesh is sinful, and therefore we die; because "the wages of sin is death" (*Gen.* iii. 3, 17, 18, 19; *Rom.* vi. 23). Our flesh and bones must die, decay, and return to the dust from which they were taken,

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because of the sin that is in them. If we had no sin in ourselves, we should not die. Therefore our death shows we are sinners.

But our Saviour had no sin, because He is God, and His body of flesh was without sin.

He took it in order to be one of us; but why?—What made Him leave Heaven and the hosts of Angels and Archangels around His Father's throne, to come to be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (*Is.* liii), to make Himself of no reputation; but to suffer; to be reviled and to be humbled, and degraded even unto death upon the cross? (*Phil.* ii. 6, 7, 8.) Why would He do all that, children, think ye?

— Because He loved us.

Of course; but I want another answer.

When you, Lucy, the other day had done something mother didn't like, and you were afraid to see her and speak to her, what did sister Emma do?

— She took me by the hand and brought me to mother, and begged mother to forgive me.

And did she forgive you?

— Yes; because Emma asked her to do so.

So did our Blessed Saviour also make Himself one of us, not only because He loved us—of course, that,—but in order to bring us to God His Father; to ask Him to forgive us our sins; and thus, to make peace between God—who was angry with us because of our sin—and ourselves, who have sinned against Him.

But, children, sin, though forgiven, must be

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punished. Because "punishment" is like "payment" for sin; so that until we are punished, we are still in debt—to whom, do you think?

— To God?

To God's justice. Justice is in Him, and like Him—eternal; and no man can sin against it, without having to pay for it—by being punished.

But what is "justice?"

— Doing what is just.

And what is that?

— Giving to everybody what he deserves.

Yes; "to reward everyone according to his works" (*S. Matt.* xvi. 27).

"To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life;

"But unto them who do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath.

"For there is no respect of persons with God" (*Rom.* ii. 6, 7, 8, 11).

The punishment Adam brought upon himself for his transgression of God's order, and upon us, Adam's children, is—death, death of the body: to die and perish for ever; and death of the soul, which is to exist for ever, away from God. This is what God said to Adam after he had sinned: "Dying thou shalt die" (*Gen.* ii. 17).

And so it would have been, if God in His love for us, had not sent His Son into the world, to bear the punishment that was to fall upon us; and thus to save us from it.

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How could He do it?—Could I be punished for one of you, children—and would it be right?

— No.

Of course not; because your fault, whatever it might be, is your own, and not mine. So that if you, who deserved punishment, escaped; and I who didn't deserve it, was punished, it would be a double wrong.

You know you don't feel a blow another receives, because you and he are two. How then could you be punished for his fault?

— No; we couldn't.

How then could our Saviour be punished instead of us, and yet be so justly? So that God's justice be satisfied, and we be forgiven?

For, in order "to bear our chastisement," as the prophet says (*Is.* liii.), He must die for us; and in order to save us, He must give us everlasting life, —that is, give our soul, that was to have existed away from God for ever—right to come back to Paradise, and be with Him for ever.

But how could the Saviour die if He had no sin? Since He, being God as well as man, has life in Himself, which death cannot touch?

You and I, children, can't suffer or be punished one for another, because we are two people.

But our Saviour, being God, and so, almighty, made Himself one with us, by taking our human form and nature. So that, as I told you before, not only does He feel with us, the same as we do, but He was also punished instead of us.

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He took our sins upon Himself and bare them on His body on the cross. It was the weight of those sins that made Him bow the head, and give up the ghost and die.

For since He had no sin of His own, He couldn't have died, unless our sins had been laid on Him, and unless they had been reckoned by God as if they were His own. So that God turned away from Him for a while; and that made Him cry—"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

You see then, children, that our Saviour's death on the cross showed that He was really bearing our sins, and that He died because they were laid on Him. So that He suffered on our account, and instead of us.

But as He had no sin in Himself, and was only bearing our sins, His body, when dead, would not decay like our bodies, that decay and return to dust, because of the sin that is in them.

Then again, as our Saviour has life in Himself, He must have risen again. He, therefore, rose again, early on the third day from His death on the Friday; so that, as Scripture says, "He saw no corruption" (*Acts*, xiii. 37), but brake asunder the grave, and rose again, in His own power, and through the life that is in Him.

And as He made Himself one with us, in order to bear our sins, so also did He make us one with Him, in His resurrection from the dead. He thus bare our sins and their punishment, and having

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overcome death for us also, He opened for us the door into everlasting life.

You understand, then, why He always spoke of death as of "sleep." Because, as death could not hold Him dead for long, so also will death hold us dead no longer than to the morning of the Resurrection. Our Saviour made all this clear by His death and resurrection; therefore is He said to have "brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 *Tim.* i. 10).

See, children, what bright hope it gives us. As we saw at our Saviour raising the Ruler's daughter (p. 110), death is only a sleep between to-day and to-morrow.

When you go to bed at night, you think of getting up in the morning. You would feel very different, and would sit up all night, if you were told there would be no morning, but only a long endless night.

So do those who have no faith in the Saviour. They have no hope beyond the grave, and try not to die if they can. Yet death fetches them, nevertheless. But those who believe in Him, and that He is "the Resurrection and the Life," die in sure and certain hope of a joyful Resurrection through Him.

But now, tell me how was it that Mary Magdalene did not know it was the Saviour who asked her why she wept, but thought it was the gardener? She knew Him well before He died and rose again; How then was it that she took Him for some one

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else, although she had seen and known Him only three days before?

— Because He was different?

Yet He had the same voice. For although Mary did not know Him by His looks, yet she knew His voice when He said to her: "Mary."

And why were the disciples frightened, thinking they saw a spirit, when He appeared among them and said: "Peace be unto you," and asked them why they were so terrified at His presence? "Behold," said He, "My hands and My feet that it is I Myself; handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me have" (*S. Luke*, xxiv. 36-40).

And when He walked with the two disciples going to Emmaus, how was it they didn't know Him? Nor yet all the disciples, when He appeared to them at the sea of Tiberias? (*S. Luke*, xxiv. 16-36; *S. John*, xxi.)

You see, children, our Saviour had the same body, and yet it was so different that neither Mary Magdalene nor the disciples knew Him. What made the difference?

You don't seem to know.

I'll tell you. Before His death, He was bearing our sins, and that made Him look like one of the people. But He left those sins in the grave, and rose without them, in the same body, less our sins; therefore also more beautiful.

It was a glorified body, a body without sin and fit for heaven, whither He is gone up, in that same

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body, and where He is now, and where He will remain, until He comes upon the clouds of heaven in great glory, with His Holy Angels, to judge the quick and dead.

He rose in the same kind of body in which they shall rise again who, like His martyr Stephen, fall asleep in Him, when they die.

And on what day did He rise again?

— On Sunday.

On the third day from Friday—that is, on the first day of the week, which His disciples called "the Lord's Day" (*Rev.* i. 10). Because it was His day, a day of gladness and of rejoicing for His Church, when they saw Him come forth from the grave, as "the first fruits of them that slept" (1 *Cor.* xv. 23). On Easter-day—"the Queen of days."

Why is He so called? What are "the first fruits?"

They are both the first and the best.

And the Saviour is the first since He is "the Prince of the Kings of the earth, the first and the last" (*Rev.* i. 5, 8, 11); and He is best, since He loved us and gave Himself for us.

But He is also the first fruits of them that slept, because it is He who made the Resurrection, by overcoming death. He raised others before His own death, but only to show that "He is the Resurrection and the Life," and that "he that believeth in Him shall never die, but live for ever with Him in His Kingdom above."

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Our Saviour rose on the first day of the week. Where was He on the Saturday—the Sabbath-day?

— In the grave.

— He went down into hell.

Well, was it a day of rejoicing or of sorrow for the disciples?

— Of sorrow.

Of course; because the Lord lay dead and buried. And they yet hardly believed that He would rise again the next day.

You then see, children, why the disciples and the Church of Christ after them, could not keep the Sabbath day holy; and why they kept the Lord's day holy, and rejoiced in it, as in the day on which He rose again.

But what Lord's day in particular was that?

— Easter-day.

Quite right. Do you know why?—I'll tell you.

That was the Passover, you know, at which the lamb was slain, in remembrance of the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt; when the Angel passed over the houses of the Israelites on which the blood of the lamb was sprinkled, and spared those houses. That happened in the spring, at the beginning of a new year, when the children of Israel escaped from their bondage, and began a new life as God's people.

Now that lamb was a figure of our Saviour, who delivered us from the bondage of sin, and from death, by His death and resurrection.

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Therefore did He suffer, die, and rise again also at the Passover, or Easter; which, for that reason, the Church calls "the Queen of days," and always keeps in the spring; when flowers come out, and trees bud forth to tell us of the resurrection unto life—and to warn us to think of it.

And therefore also, do we adorn our churches with flowers on Easter-day; not only in token of rejoicing, but also because they remind us of Him, who died for us and rose again, and is alive for evermore.

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XXVIII.

THE SECOND DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

S. John, xxi. 1, *to the end of verse* 14.

OUR Saviour, after His resurrection, did not go about with His disciples, preaching the Gospel and working miracles on people, as He used to do before His death on the cross. Because His ministry was done.

But He now showed Himself only on certain occasions to His friends and disciples, during forty days (*Acts*, i. 3), in order that they should be quite sure it was He Himself, their Lord and Master, with whom they were wont to go about, in whom they believed and whom they loved; but was now, after His resurrection, in the body in which He was about to go up into heaven.

So the disciples, whom He had not yet sent into the world to preach the Gospel, were waiting for His order to go, and for the Holy Ghost, He promised He would send them shortly from heaven. And while thus waiting, they went back to their country, Galilee, there to ply their calling of fishers, in order to get a living.

Most of the disciples were there together on the banks of the Lake of Tiberias, perhaps near Beth-

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saida, when Peter said to them: "I go a fishing," and they said they too would go with him.

And they went in their boats—perhaps the same boats in which John and James, the sons of Zebedee, were sitting mending their nets, or, in which Peter was fishing, when, three years before, the Saviour called them to follow Him.

And that night they caught nothing.

But early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, and asked them if they had got any fish. They said, No. He then told them to cast the net on the right side of the boat, where they would find plenty of fish. And they did so, although they didn't know it was the Lord.

And when they had cast the net on that side, they caught a hundred and fifty-three large fish; and yet, although there were so many and so large, the net did not break.

Then John said to Peter: It is the Lord. And when Peter heard it, he put on his fisher's coat and went into the water to come to Jesus. He loved his Master, and was bold and fearless, and wouldn't wait until the boat that was dragging the net should reach the shore; but he jumped into the water in order to come the quicker to his Master.

But when they came ashore, they found a fire of coals, with fish and bread the Saviour had got ready for them. He then told them to bring some of the fish they had just caught, and bade them come and dine—that is, eat their early meal.

So they ate and drank with Him. And yet no

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one dared ask Him: Who art Thou? knowing it was the Lord. This was the third time He showed Himself to His disciples after He was risen from the dead.

Now, children, is not this miracle of the draught of fishes a little different from the first draught the disciples caught, when the Saviour called them? (*S. Luke*, v. 1-12).

See. Then, as now, they had toiled all night and caught nothing. Then, at the Lord's bidding, they let down their net in deep water, and caught so many fish that their net brake, and their boats began to sink with the load of fish.

Now, also, the disciples had toiled all night and caught nothing; but at the Saviour's bidding they let down their net, and caught many great and good fish; and yet, this time, their net did not break.

— 'Twas a new net; t'other was an old one.

You don't know that. Both nets were good enough; if anything, this one had three years' more wear, and was older. Perhaps it was the very net the sons of Zebedee mended with their father. It broke then, and didn't break now, for some reason, may be.

Let us see. As the Apostles were most of them fishers, the Saviour taught them sundry things through their craft.

Thus He told them, that like as they had, many a time, dragged their own net to land, and had taken the good fish out of it, and thrown

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the bad away, so it would be in the end of the world.

The net, then, represented the preaching of the Gospel in the world, by them, and by others, that would make up what is now called the Christian Church; in which some preach the true Gospel of Christ and of His Apostles; and others preach a false gospel of their own; thus deceiving many, and gathering of every kind. Yet the choosing will not be left to men, but to angels; who will make no mistake in severing the good from the bad.

Then, when the Saviour told Andrew and Peter to launch out into the deep for a draught, we are not told they were all good fish that they caught. But only that they were so many that the net brake; and that they had to call to their partners, to come and help them.

That may represent the preaching of the Gospel by the Apostles, and the great number of people they converted and baptized, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles. And their partners who helped them to bring in the fish, are the bishops and ministers and evangelists who came after them, preaching the Gospel of Christ, and working with the Apostles, to bring souls to Him; just as the Apostles themselves finished the work begun by the prophets.

And the net breaking then, was to show what rents and tears there would be in the Church of Christ; whereby many good fish are lost. Those

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divisions and dissensions began even in the days of the Apostles, and have lasted until now; when many souls are lost to the Church of Christ through sects—that is, rents and holes made in the net by men, who preach their own gospel, and not the Gospel of Christ.

But this time, for all that there were so many large fish in the net, it did not break. Why?—On which side of the boat did the Apostles let down the net?

— On the right side.

And there are two sides to the Church of God; the right for heaven, and the left for this world. All the fish now caught were good; there was to be no choosing, and the net did not break.

So there are no divisions, no rents in the Church above. All souls brought to it through the preaching of Christ's Gospel, as He and His Apostles taught and preached it, shall be fitted thereby for His kingdom above; and not one will be missing.

But what is the meaning of the fish and bread, which was ready with the Saviour, on the beach, before the Apostles brought their own fish?

It represents the spirits of just men made perfect, such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and the prophets, and holy men of old, who had died in the faith (*Heb.* xi. 13), before the Apostles were born. They too, were good fish, and with the Saviour in heaven, before He sent His Apostles to preach His Gospel, and to bring in all the souls that are to be saved through it.

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Then all will sit at meat in the kingdom of Heaven, with the Saviour, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the saints of old. They will part no more; neither will He show Himself to them at times only; but they will be risen again with Him; and will live and reign with Him for ever.

You see, children, how the two draughts of fishes differed from each other. The first was of the Church on earth; the last, after the Lord's resurrection, was of the Church in Heaven.

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XXIX.

OUR LORD'S ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN.

S. Luke, xxiv. 50, *to the end; and Acts*, i. 1, *to the end of* v. 11.

OUR Saviour having remained forty days on earth, after his Resurrection, in order that His disciples and others might see Him, that it was He Himself, truly risen again—the time came when, as He said to His disciples, He must leave them, to go back to His Father in heaven; there to prepare a place for them in one of the many mansions of that blessed place. That where He is, there they might be with Him (*S. John*, xiv. 2, 3).

He had told them, He would send them to preach His Gospel in the world, and that they should suffer much from the heathen, for His sake. For that people would even think they were doing God service, and pleasing Him, by tormenting them to death.

He told them they would be hated of all men, as men had hated Him, their master; but that they needn't fear. He would never leave them nor forsake them; "but would be with them alway, even unto the end of the world" (*S. John*, xiv. 18, 27; *S. Matt.* xxviii. 20).

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But although He had chosen them and ordained them to be His Apostles (*S. John*, xv. 16), He had not yet sent them on their errand to preach the Gospel; neither would He do so, while He was yet with them.

While He was with them, He taught them what to preach, what to do, and what to say; and that, as He sent them, and they were His messengers—those who received them and hearkened to them, received Him and hearkened to Him, because they brought His message and came in His name. But He also told them, that those who cast them out and ill-used them, did it to Him, and would be judged accordingly. Because you know, children, that when a servant brings a message, and the servant is turned away, the insult is, not to the servant, but to the master who sent him.

But the time was come that He must leave them, and send them forth to preach His Gospel to the world.

He therefore, led them out of the city as far as to Bethany—to a lonely knoll on the other side of the Mount of Olives, above Bethany, whence one has a beautiful view of the country round—and there, "He lifted up His hands, and blessed them." Shouldn't you like to have been there, children, and to have seen the Saviour bless His Apostles?

And He said to them: "Fear not, all power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth: Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in

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the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (*S. Matt.* xxviii. 18-20).

But although He had chosen and ordained them, and was now sending them forth in His Name—and what a Name, children!—yet were they not to start on their errand until after He had sent down the Holy Ghost from Heaven upon them; to give them wisdom to teach; power to work miracles, and faith to suffer trouble for His sake. To teach them to speak at once languages they had never heard before; and to give them patience to endure all the trials that would come upon them.

And He told them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait until the Holy Ghost was sent down upon them. And it was sent on the day of Pentecost, you know, only ten days after (*Acts*, ii.).

"So when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

"And while they looked stedfastly towards heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel:

"Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (*Acts*, i. 9, 10, 11).

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And He is there now, sitting at the right hand of the Father, as our Friend, our Intercessor, and our Advocate with Him. You know, what "a friend" is, children; but what is an "intercessor?"

How was it, Jack Staples, that your father didn't punish you the other day?

— Because my brother asked him not to.

Well, your brother kindly "interceded for you." He "stepped between" father and yourself, and prayed father to forgive you. He was an "intercessor" for you with father, who would have punished you, if your brother Robert had not "interceded" for you.

So also does our Saviour intercede for us with His Father; praying Him to have pity on us, and not to punish us, as we deserve to be punished for our sins.

But what is an advocate?

What did your brother say to father, to make him spare you the rod?

— He told him, he hadn't heard the right story, quite; and that I wasn't so bad as he thought; that I am but a small boy, and shall know better another day.

Then Robert not only was an intercessor for you with father, but he was also your "advocate" —he tried to find out everything he could to make father forgive you. He made out the best of your conduct, instead of the worst; because he wished to save you a beating. He told no lies;

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only begged father to look kindly at what you had done.

You asked your brother to speak to father for you; you called him, so to speak, to your side, to speak for you—that is, to be your "advocate" with father.

And so is our Saviour "our Advocate" with His Father. If we call to Him in thought, or in prayer, He comes, stands at our side, and speaks to His Father for us. He prays Him to consider our weakness, our temptations; and to have pity on us. And He does it better than any advocate could do. Because advocates are paid to plead; and they often say very odd things indeed, in trying to make out their case.

But our Saviour was tempted and tried like us in all things; so that He feels for us, and with us; "He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (*Heb.* iv. 15, 16), who was once a child, like you, little people.

So He knows how children think and feel, how easy it is for them to be naughty, and how difficult it is to be good. So He does not therefore expect children to be wiser than they can be at their time of life; but He expects them to be good; to love and fear Him, and to obey father and mother—according to their years.

And He is now sitting at the right hand of His Father, to be our Intercessor and our Advocate with Him.

He tells us, therefore, not to be afraid: but if

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our heart condemns us—and you know, children, that when you have said or done anything wrong, you feel it within you—when we feel like that, He tells us to come boldly on our knees to His Father's Throne.

He then takes us by the hand, so to say, and brings us to His Father, and asks Him to forgive us for His sake. Because He loved us so much, that He died for us, to bear our punishment, and to suffer instead of us.

And He tells us to come at all times, when we need His grace to help us; not only to resist the temptations of the devil, when he tries to make us do wrong—but at all times. When we are in trouble or sorrow; or when we can't see our way out of anything we are doing. When we are in difficulty, He tells us not to be afraid; but to come, and receive His grace to help us in time of our need (*Heb.* iv. 16).

So that, children, when you are in trouble about anything—and little hearts like yours often have big sorrows—don't fret, but turn your heart towards Him, and ask Him to help you out of your trouble.

Be sure He won't give you more to bear than you have strength for; but when He sees fit to send you trouble, at any time in your life, He will make a way for you out of it, if you ask Him to do so.

For that is why He is now in heaven; and why He must remain there until all those who love Him

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shall have been gathered from all nations, to be with Him for ever.

Then He will come again to fetch them. He will come with His angels, in great glory, upon the clouds of Heaven; to judge the quick, and the dead that shall rise again.

And to give a Crown of Life to all those who, "looking forward to His coming"—"shall have been faithful to Him even unto death" (2 *Tim.* iv. 7, 8; *Rev.* ii. 10).

THE END.

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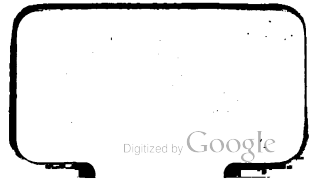
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